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FOLK TALES OF UTTAR PRADESH

K. P. BAHADUR



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GENERAL EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Folklore in the different parts of India is a rich legacy for us. While researches in ancient and modern history have been directed in recent decades more to the succession of kings and political shifts not much notice has been paid to the culture, complex traditions and social beliefs of the common people. The sociologists have also to pay a good deal of attention to the customs and beliefs of the people and changes therein through the ages. They have rather neglected the study of folklore which is a reliable index to the background of the people. There has always been an easy mobility of the folklore through pilgrimages, *melas* and fairs. The wandering minstrels, *sadhus* and *fakirs* have also disseminated them. People of the North visiting the temples of the South and *vice versa* carry their folk tales, songs, riddles and proverbs with them and there is an inconspicuous integration. The *dharamsalas*, inns and the *Chattis* (places of rest where the pilgrims rest and intermingle) worked as the clearing house for the folk tales, traditional songs and riddles. That is why we find a somewhat common pattern in folk literature of different regions. The same type of folk tale will be found in Kashmir and in Kerala with different regional complex. These stories were passed on from generation to generation by word of mouth before they came to be reduced to writing.

Folklorists have different approaches to the appreciation of folklore. Max Mueller has interpreted the common pattern in folk literature as evidence of nature-myths. Sir L. Gomme thought that a historical approach is the best for the study of folklore. But Frazer would rather encourage a commonsense approach and to him old and popular folk literature is mutually interdependent and satisfies the basic curiosities and instincts of man. That folklore is a vital element in a living culture has been underlined in recent years by scholars like Malinowski and Radcliffe Brown.

It is unfortunate that the study of folklore in India is of very recent origin. This is all the more regrettable because the *Panchatantra* stories which had their origin in Bihar had spread through various channels almost throughout the world. As late as in

1959, T. Benfey had held that there is an unmistakable stamp of Indian origin in most of the fairy tales of Europe. The same stories with different twists or complexes have come back to us through Grimm and Aesop and the retold stories are greedily swallowed by our children. That India has neglected a proper study of the beautiful motifs of our folk tales is seen in the fact that the two large volumes of dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend published by Messrs Funk and Wagnalls and Company of New York have given a very inadequate reference to India.

What is the secret of the fascination of the folk tales that the old, young and the children are kept enthralled by their recitals? The same story is often repeated but does not lose its interest. The secret is the satisfaction that our basic curiosity finds in the folk tales. The folk tales through phantasies, make-beliefs and complacent understanding help the primitive man to satisfy his curiosity about the mysteries of the world and particularly the very many inexplicable phenomena of nature around him. We have an element of primitiveness in our mind in spite of the advancement of science around us. Even a scientist finds great delight in the fairy tales of the moon being attacked as the origin of the lunar eclipse. Through the folk tales man exercised his once-limited vision and somehow or the other we would like to retain that limited vision even when we have grown up. The advancement in science can never replace the folk tales. On the other hand, folk tales have helped the scientific curiosity in the man. In spite of the scientific explanation as to why earthquakes take place, the old, young and the child would still be delighted to be told that the world rests on the hood of the great snake and when the snake is tired with the weight, he shakes the hood and there is an earthquake. Among the Mundas, an aboriginal tribe in Bihar, there is a wonderful explanation of the Orion. The sword and belt of the Orion, the Mundas imagine, form their appropriate likeness to the plough and plough-share which the supreme *Sing Bonga* God first shaped in the heavens and then taught people on earth how to use the plough and the plough-share. It is further in the Munda folk tale that while the *Sing Bonga* was shaping the plough and the plough-share with a chisel and a hammer he observed a dove hatching its eggs at a little distance. The *Sing Bonga* threw his hammer at the dove to bag

the game. He missed his mark and the hammer went over the dove's head and hung on a tree. The hammer corresponds to the Pleiades which resemble a hammer. The Aldebaran is the dove and the other stars of Hyades are the eggs of the dove. Any illiterate Munda boy will unmistakably point out these star groups.

Weather and climate have their own stories and are often connected with particular stages of the crops. The wet season and the hottest month are intimately associated with the ripening of crops or the blossoming of trees or the frequency of dust storms and stories are woven round them. But nothing is more satisfying as a folk story than the explanation of the phases of the stars, moon and the sun. A Munda would point out the milky way as the *Gai Hora* i.e. the path of the cows. The *Sing Bonga* God leads his cows every day along this path—the dusty path on the sky is due to the dust raised by the herd. The dust raised by the cows sends down the rains. A story of this type can never fail to sustain its interest in spite of all the scientific explanation of the astral bodies.

The “why and wherefore” of the primitive mind tried to seek an answer in the surrounding animal and plant kingdom. Animals are grouped into different categories according to their intelligence and other habits. The fox is always sly while the cow is gentle. The lion and the tiger have a majestic air while the horse is swift, sleek and intelligent. The slow-going elephant does not forget its attendant nor does he forget a man that teases him. Monkeys are very near the mankind. The peacock is gay while the crow is shrewd. The tortoise is slow-going but sure-footed. The hare is swift but apt to laze on the road. The primitive mind is not unintelligent to decipher these inherent characteristics of the common animals he meets. Similarly, when he sees a large and shady peepal tree he naturally associates it as the abode of the sylvan god. The thick jungle with its trees and foliage is known to be frequented by thieves and dacoits. Any solitary hut in the thick of the forest must be associated with someone unscrupulous or uncanny. These ideas are commonly woven into stories and through them the primitive mind seeks to satisfy the eternal why and how of the mind. Folk literature is often crude and even grotesque. The stories of the witches and the ogres come in this category. There is nothing to be surprised

at that. They reflect the particular stage of the development of the human mind and also a projection of the beliefs and fads of the mind. Scientific accuracy should never be looked for in folk tales although folk tales are a very good reflex of the social development of a particular time.

It is enough if the basic ideas regarding the animal and plant kingdom still satisfy that the donkey is dense or stupid or the snake typifies slyness and the fox is deceitful repeated in ancient folk tales have stood the test of age and that would show that the primitive mind was not foolish or credulous. The very idea that the folk tales have woven man, nature, animal and plant creation together shows the great flight of imagination and a singular development of mind. Introduction of moral lessons or any dogma was not done as an after-thought but came in as a very natural development.

The last source of the folk tales is human society itself. The elemental moorings that are at the root of human society are sought to be illustrated in folk tales. The day-to-day life of the common man finds its full depiction in the folk tales. Parental love, family happiness, children's adventurous habits, love and fear for the unknown, greed etc. are some of the usual themes of folk tales. The common man yearns for riches and comforts, he cannot usually look for. He dreams of riches, princes, kingdoms etc., and finds a satisfaction in stories of fantasy. Men love gossip and scandal. Women cannot keep secrets, children will love their parents, a mother-in-law will always think the daughter-in-law needs to be told—these are some of the basic ideas that make up much of our daily life. The folk tales are woven round them and whether fantastic or with a moral undertone they only reflect the daily chores, tears and joys of the common man.

Unknowingly, the folklorists bring in the religious custom, beliefs, food habits, modes of dress, superstitions etc. and thereby leave a picture of the culture-complex of the region and its people. A tribal story does not picture a king riding a white big foaming horse followed by hundreds of other horsemen going for a *shikar*. In a tribal story the Raja will be found cutting the grass and bringing back a stack of it for feeding his cows but a folk tale more current in urban areas will have large palaces, liveried-servants, ministers and courtiers in the king's court. All this only means that the time and the ~~venue~~ venue of the origin of the stories are widely different. It

is here that the sociologists and the anthropologists come in useful. As life is different in rural and urban areas or is chequered with goodness or badness of the world so is folk literature diversified, as it must be—being a replica of life.

It is a pity that these beautiful folk tales in India were almost on the point of disappearance when a few pioneers mostly consisting of foreign missionaries and European scholars looked into them and made compilations in different parts of India. Our present run of grandmothers knows very little of them. The professional story tellers who were very dearly sought after by the old and the young, not to speak of the children, have almost completely disappeared from India. The film industry and the film songs pose a definite threat to folklore.

The Sterling Publishers are to be congratulated for launching the project of publishing a compilation of 20 volumes consisting of the folk tales of different regions. The work has been entrusted to specially selected writers who have an intimate knowledge of their region. The regional complex of the stories has been sought to be preserved as far as possible. The stories have an elemental involvement about them and they are such as are expected to appeal to the child and its parents. We expect the reader of the folk tales of the particular region to have a feeling after a study of the stories that he has enjoyed a whiff of air of that area. We want him to have an idea of how Kashmiri folks retire in wintry nights with the *Kangri* under the folds of their clothes to enjoy gossips and how they enjoy their highly spiced meaty food. We want him to appreciate the splash of colour of the sari and the flowers that are a must in Tamilnadu. We want him to know the stories that are behind some of the famous temples in the South as Kanjeevaram temple. We want him to know the story regarding the construction of the famous Konark temple. We want him to enjoy the stories of the heroes of Gujarat, Punjab and Rajasthan in their particular roles. We want the reader to have an idea of the peace and quiet of a hut in the lap of the Kumaon hills. We want the reader to enjoy some of the folk tales of Bengal and Bihar that have found wings in other parts of India and to appreciate the village life with their *Alpana* and *Bratas*. At the same time we want the reader to appreciate the customs and manners of the Santhals, Garos, and the other tribes inhabiting Nefra and Assam.

A set of twenty volumes of folk tales of the different regions of India by selected authors is an ambitious programme. Folk tales have great impact in bringing in national integration of the country. A Keralite will see a pattern of familiarity while reading the folk tales of Bengal, Assam and Kashmir. Maharashtra and Orissa will come nearer to each other through ties of folk tales. The reader will feel that he is at one with his brother or sister elsewhere. A spread of knowledge of the social patterns of the different regions is a pre-requisite for national integration. It can be modestly claimed that this folk tales series will be of great help in that direction. The Publishers want to have a miniature India in these 20 volumes.

The authors have to be thanked for their interest in the work. I am sure that they have enjoyed the assignment. It is hoped the books will be found useful and interesting to the public. I have no hesitation in saying that the stories of the different areas do make out a miniature India. It is hoped the reader will enjoy the stories and will come to know more of the region and its people.

P.C. Roy Chaudhury

PREFACE

India lives in villages. It is natural, therefore, that our folktales should deal in a large measure with village life. Indeed the villages of India are the true soil for them. Such tales circulate from person to person till they become so much part of the village tradition that it becomes difficult to separate fact from fiction. Indeed, it is none the worse for being false. The test of a good tale is only in the extent to which it engrosses. The credit for keeping folktales alive should go to the old grandmothers who have preserved them by continuous narration.

The folktales of Uttar Pradesh are rich and varied. The state is inhabited by many diverse races and people. In the north the Himalyan Range forms its natural frontier with the two famous peaks of Trishul and Nanda Devi. Beautiful spots like Gangotri and Yamunotri as also Badrinath and Kedarnath, very sacred for the Hindus, are located in this region. There are other important places of pilgrimage like Prayag, Varanasi, Mathura, Brindaban, Hardwar, and Sarnath, and towering summer resorts like Nainital, Mussoorie, Ranikhet, Chakrata and Lansdowne. Historical places like Agra with the Taj Mahal and Fatehpur Sikri, also give colour to the State. Bundelkhand, which forms the south-west corner, has a peculiar charm and tradition of its own. Here the brave Rani of Jhansi made herself immortal by her valour. Oudh, which forms the core of the Province, is remembered for its polished language and courtesy, for it was the land of Nawabs and scions of noble families. They relate to kings and priests, traders and artisans, and not the least, to the sturdy farmers.

Some of these folktales were collected by me at source from the villages and towns in which they are current. Others have been told by friends and relations. Some are those which have been coming down from generation to generation, and have become part of the chronicle of folklore.

District Magistrate
Muzzafarnagar

K. P. Bahadur

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F O L K T A L E S
O F
U T T A R P R A D E S H

1

THE WATCHFUL JAT

IN the town of Shamli in Muzaffarnagar district there once lived a Jat who was greatly harassed by his wife. She would sit idle and nag him the whole day. She wouldn't even take his food to the field in which he worked. The poor Jat had himself to draw water, cook the meal, and look after buffaloes, cows, and bullocks. If he ever said anything amiss, even by mistake, she would create a scene by crying loudly so that all the neighbours came running to see what the matter was, and then rail without mercy on the unlucky Jat. Whenever there was any work to do she would say: "I have an upset stomach, so bad that I can hardly eat anything."

One day the Jat thought he would play a trick on his deceitful wife. He got up early in the morning and said: "I have to go out of the village today for some important work. Get up and make some *chappaties* for me." The Jat's wife began to feign that she was ill and said amidst moans: "O ! oh! my poor waist! It's paining terribly. It seems it will break into two, ho! Make the *chappaties* yourself." The Jat got up and lit the fire, and soon prepared four chappaties for himself, which he bound, along with some jaggery, in his end-cloth. He also made four chappaties for his wife and kept them by her bedside for her to eat. She said: "Why did you make them for me? Don't you know I remain ill all the time? How can I eat them?"

The Jat got up to leave, and said: "All right, I am off." "When will you be back?" The wife asked.

"After four or five days," the Jat said, "I have to go a long way and can't finish the work earlier than that."

"Try to come early," the wife said, "I shall be lonely, and won't know how to pass time."

The Jat went away, and closed the door behind him. As soon as he had gone the wife got up, and after having a good bath she set a pot of rice-curry to cook on the fire. Then she kneaded some flour, mixed some salt and a lot of butter to make it tasty, baked a big soft chappati for herself. She also took out a large lump of butter and a pot full of butter-milk and started eating.

The Jat was observing everything from a window where he had hid himself. As soon as he saw his wife eating, he opened the door and stepped in. The woman gave a start and said: "Who is there?"

The Jat came in front of her and said: "It is me."

She was greatly upset. Hiding her embarrassment she said: "You said you won't be back at least for four to five days. How did you come back all of a sudden?"

The Jat made up a tale and said: "After I had gone some distance I saw a black cobra, and thinking it to be a bad omen I thought I won't go ahead and so I have come back."

"How fat was the cobra?" the Jat's wife asked.

"As fat as the chappati you have baked!" replied the Jat.

"And how fast did it run?" she enquired.

"As fast as you poured *ghee* into the rice curry!" the Jat said.

The Jat's wife then knew that he had seen everything. She was about to say something when the Jat picked up a stick in order to give her a good beating. But she was prepared for him and wresting the stick out of his hands she threw it into the fire!

2

THE DILIGENT SPARROW AND THE LAZY CROW

A crow and a sparrow were close friends. They took a field jointly, and when the time came to plough it, the sparrow said to the crow: "Brother crow, come let us plough our field." The crow who was interested only in having a good time said:

"You go, sparrow, I'm just coming,
Let me first smoke my hubble-bubble,
And swing on the twig of the mango tree."

The sparrow went alone to the field and ploughed it. The crow did not come. Next day the sparrow got up very early while the stars were yet in the sky. He went to his friend, and said: "Brother crow, let us return before dawn to level the field. We will be free for the day after that. The lazy crow answered:

"You go, sparrow, I'm just coming,
Let me first smoke my hubble-bubble,
And swing on the twig of the mango tree."

The sparrow again went to the field and waited in vain for the crow. When the crow did not come the sparrow set to the work himself and worked hard on the field till all the lumps of mud were broken and the ground was levelled. The crow kept wandering about care-free, and enjoying himself.

When it began to drizzle and the earth became damp, the farmers were glad because fields were ready for sowing. After some days the sparrow went to the

crow and said: "Brother crow, now is the time to sow our field. Come let us scatter the grains in it." The crow gave the same old reply:

"You go, sparrow, I'm just coming,
Let me first smoke my hubble-bubble,
And swing on the twig of the mango tree."

Again the sparrow had to go alone. He found himself helpless and could not say anything. So he sowed the field all alone, while the lordly crow rocked on the mango tree! When the tiny sprouts showed themselves on the field, the sparrow danced with joy. But soon the weeds appeared and he went to the crow and said: "Come, let us weed out a field otherwise we won't have a good crop." The unmindful crow went on swinging on the branch of the mango tree and answered as before:

"You go, sparrow, I'm just coming,
Let me first smoke my hubble-bubble,
And swing on the twig of the mango tree."

When the time came for watering the field the crow again gave the sparrow the go-by and did not help him. The poor sparrow had to water the whole field all alone.

Slowly the grain began to ripen and the stalks of wheat became hard and brown. The fields assumed golden colour. The fateful day came when all the labour taken in ploughing and sowing and watering would be rewarded. The sparrow hastened to reap the grain, but the idle crow still refused to lend a hand and repeated as before:

"You go, sparrow, I'm just coming,
Let me first smoke my hubble-bubble,
And swing on the twig of the mango tree."

When the time came for separating the chaff from the wheat, the crow kept on sitting on the tree and again it was the sparrow who had to do the job.

Finally the day came for the division of the produce between the two. The wheat was piled up on one side, the chaff on the other. The cunning crow flew and alighted on the grain, while the poor sparrow, who had worked so hard to produce it, had to be content with the chaff. He did not get a single grain of wheat. Yet he did not complain, for he considered it bad to have an evil thought about a friend.

Night came, and it began to rain heavily. The sparrow to whose share the chaff had fallen hid himself inside it and sheltered himself from the storm and rain. The lazy crow was caught and imprisoned in his heap of wheat and was crushed to death inside it!

3

THE PRECIOUS COUNSEL

LONG ago in the city of Banda there lived a rich merchant who had five sons. He was very rich but because he was greedy and miser the whole family was disgusted with him. He was himself frugal in his meals and would insist on his family members being the same. He would not wear good clothes nor let other do so. He would never give a single paisa in charity. Whatever money he got he buried it in the ground. He would never think of taking it out. If by mischance anyone should fall ill in the house he would not spend anything on medicine even if the person was about to die ! A guest was always unwelcome in his house. The merchant did not love anything except wealth.

One day the merchant called his sons, and giving them each a thousand rupees sent them out to start their own business. Four of them opened shops in the village, while the fifth, Jai Kumar, who was the youngest, took the money and set out to try his luck elsewhere. After going some distance he reached a big city. He took a round of the market and arrived at the house of a Brahmin who was busy writing something on a bit of paper. As Jai Kumar was tired and thirsty, he waited till the Brahmin had finished writing and then asked for a glass of water. The Brahmin rubbed his brass pot and gave him water to drink. When Jai Kumar had drunk, he asked him : "What have you written on this bit of paper?" The Brahmin said. : "There are four sentences of advice written which are of great use." When Jai Kumar asked to be shown the paper the Brahmin said; "The advice contained in it is very valuable. I can sell it to you for a thousand rupees." Hearing this Jai Kumar handed

over to the Brahmin the money which his father had given him, and took the piece of paper.

When he glanced through it he found that it contained four pieces of advice. The first was : 'Never walk or travel alone.' The second : 'Examine a bed before sitting on it.' The third : 'Remain awake in times of danger' and finally 'When you bathe, do so in a lonely place.'

When the boy reached home his father asked him : "Son, your brothers have opened shops with their money what have you done?" Jai Kumar took out the slip of paper and said : "Father, I have brought this with the money." The merchant lost his temper at his son's foolishness and turned him out of the house.

After Jai Kumar had gone some distance he found a mongoose by the side of a pond. He remembered the first advice to the effect that one should never travel alone, and picking up the mongoose put it into his coat pocket. By now he was tired, and seeing a shady tree sat down under it. He took out his food and after eating lay down with the mongoose beside him to sleep. While he was sleeping a cobra came and was about to bite him when the mongoose attacked it. The noise of the fight awoke Jai Kumar. He picked up his stick and killed the snake. After he had done so he realised the value of the first advice, for it had saved his life.

He went on and on and when it was night he came to a house in which he saw light. He thought he would put up there for the night and with this thought in mind knocked on the door. A young and beautiful woman opened the door. Jai Kumar said : "I am tired of walking the whole day, can you put me up here for the night?" The woman was as wicked as she was beautiful, and seeing him she set about trying to get his wealth. So she welcomed him and making him comfortable gave him a good meal. After he had eaten she showed him

a richly covered bed on which to sleep. He was about to lie down, when he suddenly remembered the second bit of advice given to him by the Brahmin : 'Examine a bed before sitting on it.' He lifted the cover and looked down below. To his horror he saw beneath it a deep ditch with pointed iron spikes on its bottom. The woman was shaking with fear, and seeing her treachery Jai Kumar said: "How many men have you killed and robbed in this manner?" The woman said in a trembling voice. "Spare me, young man, and I promise I will stop doing this." Jai Kumar said : "All right, but bring me all the wealth you have robbed". The woman opened her box and gave him a thousand rupees. Jai Kumar rejoiced to see the money, for he had got back the amount he had spent in getting the slip of paper from the Brahmin.

Happy at the good results of following the Brahmin's advice, Jai Kumar went further on till he reached a city. He began to search a place to stay in and came to the house of an old widow. When he asked for a lodging she welcomed him, but looked so sad that he asked her what the matter was. The old woman said : "Sir, I am happy to see you because you greatly resemble my son. But when I think of the fate that is about to befall him I am sad." "Why what is the matter mother?" Jai Kumar asked her. The woman said : "A demon has taken its abode in the body of the King's daughter in the form of a snake and in order to please it a man is given to it every night. Today is the turn of my son, and it is for him that I weep." Jai Kumar was moved by this piteous tale and offered to take the place of the widow's son. The old woman's grief turned to joy and she blessed him. Jai Kumar got a number of lamps placed in the room and sat with a sword in hand in the princess's room. He called to mind the third advice of the Brahmin and kept wide awake, all the night. When the demon came out he was so dazzled with the intense light that for a moment he could not see. Jai Kumar took advantage of this and at once slew him with the sword.

The King was very happy to find his daughter freed from the demon, and gave Jai Kumar a lot of wealth.

After Jai Kumar had made his fortune he thought he would return home. When he was on the way he camped near a river for the night. When it was morning he went to bathe, and fearing to leave his money behind in the tent tied it in a cloth and carried it with him. Remembering the Brahmin's advice, he avoided the crowded *ghats* where many people from the nearby villages were bathing, and going to a distant spot took off his clothes and had a bath in the river. While he was returning he suddenly remembered with a shock that he had left the bundle containing all his money on the spot where he had bathed. He rushed back and found it lying just where it was because there was no one around. He was much relieved to get his money back and was happy that he had spent a thousand rupees in buying the slip of paper from the Brahmin. He went back proudly home for he had gained more wealth than all the other brothers of his put together!

4

THE REWARD OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

IN a village in the hilly Almora district there were two brothers Manindra and Daya. They had their houses built together and lived with their wives and children, tilling their small orchards and grazing cattle. Daya, who was the elder, was very hard working and was always busy with some work or the other, but Manindra was extremely lazy and did very little except sleeping and lying idly in the sun. Seeing his slothful habits his wife would taunt him frequently. She would cite the example of his elder brother, but Manindra would say: "Wife, why do you pester me the whole day? Wealth and riches, loss and gain, life and death, good repute and infamy are in the hands of God. If God is pleased with me He will Himself send me wealth and riches by breaking open a roof of the room. His wife, who rather believed in the maxim that God helps those who help themselves, scoffed at him and said: "So you think! As if God has no other work except thrusting jars of gold into men's houses!" Manindra kept quiet, and went on puffing on his hubble-bubble.

One day when Manindra's wife was grazing her cattle in the forest, she saw a portion of the ground with the grass fresh cut. Her curiosity stirred, she sat there and began to remove the earth with her scythe which she carried for cutting small twings from trees to feed the cattle. Imagine her surprise when the scythe scraped against something hard, and digging a little further she found a metal jar full of gold coins. She glanced this way and that stealthily, but seeing no one in sight, put the mud back and covered the place with some leaves and dried twings so that no one may find it out. She ran

home and told her husband about her lucky find. "The jar is too heavy for me to carry alone," she said, "so come with me, and we will bring it together." All her words, however, had no effect on her stoic husband who answered indifferently: "I am not going to carry off the gold like a wretched thief. If it is in our share, God will send it to us." His wife tried to persuade him, but all in vain, and so she went to Daya's wife and confided in her. She was a very cunning woman, and after getting all the details about the place where the jar was buried she said: "Sister, I would gladly come with you to get the gold but it is night and there are many thieves and robbers on the road. We will go early tomorrow morning and get it." Manindra's wife said: "All right" and returned home. After some time when she was sure that her younger sister-in-law was asleep, she told her husband the whole story and asked him to come with her to get the jar. As soon as they arrived at the spot they began to dig out the jar but when they were halfway they were attacked by a swarm of hornets who had made a home in the jar. The hornets stung them all over their bodies. Running with pain, Daya angrily said: "Wife, it seems your wicked sister-in-law has played a joke on us. This jar is merely the nest of hornets. She has deliberately lied to you that it is full of gold coins. Let us take our revenge on her." He took off his scarf and making a bundle of it thrust it down the jar's mouth, and helped by his wife, took it to his brother's house. They quietly climbed the roof and holding the jar aloft removed the scarf and dropped it down the chimney so that the hornets may get at Manindra and his wife. As soon as the scarf was removed the imprisoned hornets flew off, and the jar with the gold coins went down the chimney, the coins spilling on the floor with a loud clank. The noise woke up Manindra, and seeing the gold lie on the floor he cried out to his wife. "See wife, being pleased with me, God has thrown the gold Himself into my house." His wife looked on at this strange sight in amazement and said: "Indeed I see that it is so." Then she collected the coins and kept them in a secure place. Manindra

looked on and said: "Didn't I tell you, God Himself rewards those with whom He is pleased. As Tulsidasji, the great poet, has said:

"As the river goes to the sea, even though the sea has no desire of it.

Even so happiness and wealth go, without being called, to the *dharmic* man."

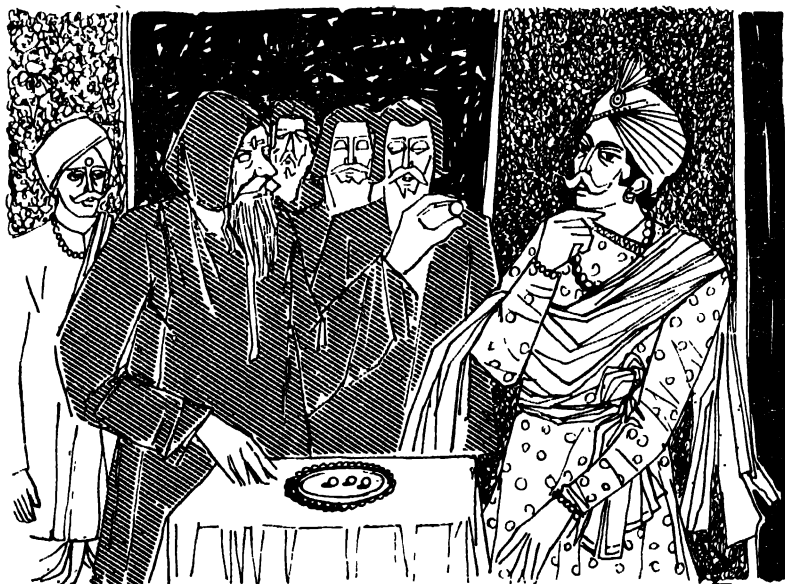
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THE FOUR BLIND MEN

LONG long ago there was a wise and benevolent King in some part of Uttar Pradesh. He kept the welfare of his subjects uppermost in his mind and was in turn doted upon by them. One day when he was returning from the hunt he met on the way four blind men. They were famished with hunger, and hearing the sound of the hooves of the King's horse, begged for alms. The King took pity on them and asked his soldiers to take them along so that he could get them something from the city to eat. After they had proceeded some distance they reached the city, and seeing a sweetmeat shop the King asked his man to buy four kilos of sweets for the blind men. When the shopkeeper was weighing the sweets, the King saw that his scales were not right, and got them tested. The sweetmeat seller was found to be charging for more weight, so the King warned him to set his scales right. When he was about to go, the men said : "Sir, you are known for your generosity, if you give us a room to live in your palace, we will pray for you all our lives. We can also be useful to you." The King smiled and said : "How so? Seeing that all of you are blind what work can you do?". The blind men said : "Sir, each of us has an exceptional gift". "Indeed!" the King exclaimed in disbelief, "and what are these gifts, pray?" The blind men said : "One of us can distinguish a real pearl from a false one; one can tell merely by touching whether a horse is good or not; one can discriminate between a true woman and a false one, while one of us can find out by instinct whether a man is faithful or treacherous." The King said : "Friends, it is difficult for anyone to believe that a blind man can do

all this. I would first like to test you before I admit you into the palace." "We don't fear being put to the test," the blindmen said.

The four blind men were ordered to present themselves in the royal *darbar*. When they came the King sent for a jeweller and asked him to put two identical pearls velvet cushions—one being real and the other an imitation. The pearls or were put before the first blind



man. He felt both of them with his hands in turn, and instantly pointed out the one which was real. All the courtiers gathered in the *darbar* applauded the blind man, and the King praised him and said: "From now on you will be my minister." Then the King ordered the keeper of the stable to bring a highly bred horse. When it came, he asked the second blind man to tell if this was a genuine breed or not. The blind man felt him thoroughly all over his back and neck and then said: "Sir, this is a horse of low breed, not fit for your Majesty's stable." The King was greatly surprised. He called for the dealer from whom the horse had been

purchased, asked him on pain of death to say truly if the horse was of low breed or not. The dealer looked at the horse and said : "Sir, this is not the horse I sold to the stable-keeper. It is some other horse." The King turned his gaze to the keeper of the stable, who began to tremble and flinging himself on his feet said : "Sir, I beg your mercy. I was tempted by the fine horse the dealer sold me, and so I substituted it with this one. The trader's horse is at my home." "Bring it at once," the King ordered sternly, and dismissed the keeper from his service. Turning to the blind man he said : "You have indeed an exceptional gift. From today I make you my minister." Then came the turn of the third blind man. The King was very eager to know how he could differentiate between a good and a bad woman. The blind man said : "Bring the chief maid-in-waiting here". The King ordered her to be brought before him. The blind man groped on her back with his hand and said : "Your plan has been foiled. Fetch the crown jewels where you have hidden them, and deliver them to the King." Everyone in the *darbar* was aghast to hear these words, and the woman turned pale. The King sent his son to see if the jewels were safe, and lo! he came back with the news that they had disappeared. Then the King ordered the room of the chief maid to be searched and the jewels were found hidden in a covered alcove. He banished the maid from his kingdom and said to the blind man, "You have given ample proof of your extraordinary gift. I appoint you my minister."

Last of all the fourth blind man appeared in the *darbar*. The King was all agog to know the result of his test, seeing that the other three had proved themselves. The blind man said : "Sir, if you don't take ill at what I do, I may proceed with the test." The King assured him, and then he said; "If it pleases you I would like the chief minister to be called." The King was somewhat taken aback by this insolence but because he had given his word, he asked the chief minister, who was his most trusted and faithful man, to be summoned. When he

came, the blind man felt his back and his chest and said : "It does not behave you to be a traitor to such a benevolent and trusting king." The chief minister flared up and said : "What do you mean by your insolent words? I will get you hanged for this." The blind man said : "If you are innocent then why have you stored the phial of poison in your purse?" Hearing this the chief minister began to tremble with fear. The King ordered the purse to be produced, and sure enough, the phial of poison was found in it. The blind man said : "Sire, the chief minister had planned to put you to death and he was aiming to usurp the throne. He was to mix this poison today in your cup of wine." The King was dumbfounded, and calling the executioners told them to take the chief minister away to the dungeon. Turning to the blind man he said : "You have saved my life as well as my kingdom. I appoint you my chief minister. The four blind men began to serve the King, and he never had any occasion to regret his choice.

THE HAUNTED SHEESHAM TREE

LONG ago when the Mughal Empire was on the decline and small chieftains had established their rule, there lived in the town of Barah a young man known as Sawant. He was god-fearing and pious, but being young, was apt to lose his temper on small affairs. He was a tall and stalwart lad with specially long arms. One day he went to Delhi in search of a job, and while he was roaming in Chandni Chowk, a youth who was going that way, inquired his place of residence. Sawant puffed up his chest and proudly said : "I belong to the town of Barah." The youth thought of making fun of him and said insolently : "If you belong to Barah, then I belong to Terah." Sawant felt very much affronted at this insulting remark, and without thinking of the consequences, in a fit of rage, he drew out his sword and chopped off the youth's head. The king's sepoy who arrived there soon after, handcuffed Sawant, and produced him in the *darbar*. When the king sat in court, Sawant was produced before him, and when asked why he had slain the youth he told him the whole story. The king, who himself took great pride in his native place, was pleased to hear this story, especially as Sawant had confessed everything, and instead of sentencing him he employed him in his service as a rent collector. Thus Sawant passed many days in the service of the king.

One day the king's minister said : "I wish to send this man, Sawant, if your majesty pleases, to the village of Shahdza to collect the government revenue. This is a very tough village and no one has ever succeeded in making the cultivators there pay up." The king gave his permission, and Sawant was sent on this difficult mission.

Now it was customary in that village to accommodate the King's rent collector in a tent under an old and thick *Sheesham* tree which lay on the outskirts of the *abadi*. Perhaps the people of the village deliberately did this, and that was the secret of their non-payment, for the tree was the abode of a jin (evil spirit). When the rent collector camped there for the night, the jin would come down while he was asleep, and devour him.

When Sawant reached the village of Shahdza, he was according to the practice given the place under the *Sheesham* tree. Being a holy man, however, instead of going to sleep, he sat on the floor and began to meditate. When the jin came down the tree, he saw Sawant sitting in meditation and was powerless to harm him. So he went away.

When the villagers found Sawant alive, hale and hearty in the morning, they became terrified, for no one till then had been known to escape the jin of the *Sheesham* tree. So they paid up all their dues without any resistance. When Sawant returned after having accomplished this task, the King was very pleased and said : "You have done a very good job. I want to give you a gift as reward, What will you have ?" Sawant said : "If it pleases your Highness, I would like to have the wood of the *Sheesham* tree." The request was readily granted. Sawant got the tree felled, and with the planks of that sturdy tree he made the massive doors of the temple, which still exists.

THE FOUR FAITHFUL FRIENDS

ONCE upon a time four friends lived in one house with a dog. The friends were devoted to each other, and to the dog as well. They had taken a vow to live and die together. One day it so happened that one of the friends went to a well nearby to drink water. While returning, a fit suddenly seized him and he began to writhe on the ground. When his companions saw him they rushed to his side, and before they could do anything his convulsions ceased, and he was dead. The friends began the lament and cry. Lifting up their voice to the sky they said : "O god, if our friendship is true, may we too join our departed friend, because without him we can never stay alive." As soon as these words had come out of their mouths, there was a loud rumbling and the earth split under their feet. All the four friends and their dog went down. The earth closed again, and then everything was quiet.

Some days after, a Nawab was passing that way on an elephant alongwith his retinue. When the elephant stepped on the spot where the four friends had disappeared, it raised its trunk and began to trumpet loudly. All the proddings of the *mahawat* were powerless to make it move even an inch. The Nawab got down and began to wonder about this strange phenomenon, when all at once a voice seemed to issue from beneath the ground which said in distinct words : "O ! blessed nobleman, there are four friends buried on the spot upon which you are standing. They have been faithful in death as they have been in life. Now, as you are a scion of a high and renowned family, they beseech you to build for them four graves, and one for the dog who remained with them

in their hour of trial. If you are a worthy son of your family, O ! wayfarer, listen to our prayer, and cause us to be in peace as all men should." The Nawab was wonderstruck and stood rooted to the ground. When he had collected his wits he ordered his men to build five graves as the voice had said. But as soon as they began to build them, two jins appeared and destroyed their work, so that however they tried they could not complete the graves. Then a voice came again from the ground, "O ! Nawab, build the graves with your own hands, and then the *jins* will be powerless." Hearing this the Nawab himself set to the task. He was able to complete the graves, and it was only then that the elephant could move from the spot.

The four graves in one line, close to each other and near them a small one, which was the fifth, are still there at Bulandsahar town. The graves are known as the *Char Yars* (four friends). Still people go to the graves and promise to be friends there. Once a promise is taken by the graves of the *Char Yars*, they can never dream of breaking their word.

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SURAJMAL'S JOURNEY TO HEAVEN

IT is said that in one of the towns of Barabanki district there once reigned a king whose minister Ajit Singh was very wise and able, and much in his confidence. Due to this the other courtiers were envious of him, chief amongst them being one by the name of Surajmal. One day they conspired against him, and going up to the King said : "Sire, Ajit Singh was boasting the other day that he can do what no one else can, your Majesty not excepted. 'There is nothing impossible for Ajit Singh,' these were his exact words." "Oh! ho!", exclaimed the King, "so he has become so vain that he thinks himself even better than me!" The courtiers were glad to hear the King speak thus, and they knew that their plan had succeeded. So Surajmal said: "Sire, it were fit to make Ajit see who is the master. He seems to have forgotten. If your Majesty permits. I may say how this can be done." The King said : "Go on, what do you suggest?" Surajmal said : "Sire, set him some tasks, which will show him that there remains something which even he—Ajit Singh—can't do." The King thought this a good idea and asked him to assign him such tasks. Surajmal, and the other courtiers, conspired together, and filling a big room with cotton they said : "Sire, if it pleases you, order Ajit Singh to convert all this cotton into yarn by tomorrow." The King called his minister and said : "Spin all this cotton into yarn by tomorrow, or else I will have you beheaded." When he saw the room full of cotton, Ajit was filled with dismay, and went home crest-fallen. The whole day he was weighed down with grief, and in the night he could not sleep. When it was morning he began to think that it were better he drowned himself in the river than

suffer the ignominy of being beheaded. So he left his home and proceeded through the forest towards the river. On the way he saw a hermit sitting beneath a shady banyan tree. He touched the hermit's feet and asked for his blessings. The hermit knew the plight of the minister by means of his spiritual powers and said : "Man's life is a holy gift, my son, and it does not behove him to end it at his own will. I will help you to overcome your difficulties. Therefore go back and do as the King wishes." Saying this he gave Ajit Singh a magic spinning wheel, a spade, and a scythe, and blessing him sent him back home. Ajit Singh took the spinning wheel and went to the palace. As soon as he set it down on the floor of the room it began to revolve by itself so fast that in the twinkling of an eye a kilo of cotton had been spun! By noon the entire room was filled with yarn and the task was done. Seeing this Surajmal and his companions were dumbfounded. Still they said : "This knave of a minister has somehow managed to do this task, but we will soon get him". Then going to the King they said: "Sire, having spun all the cotton, now Ajit Singh's vanity has risen all the more, and he says he can do tasks which even the King can't do; so if your majesty pleases he may be asked to harvest the grain in the royal farm by tomorrow." The King was well pleased at this counsel, and calling Ajit Singh said: "The wheat has grown in the farm. See that it is harvested by tomorrow". Now the farm was almost five hundred acres and it was impossible for a single man to harvest it even in a month. So Ajit Singh despaired of his life. While he was musing over this he remembered the scythe that the hermit had given him. 'It might help, as his spinning wheel did,' he thought, and next morning he took it with him and went on the farm. As soon as he started mowing the scythe slipped from his hands and flying with the speed of lightning through the wheat stalks in a moment harvested an acre of land! Within a few hours the entire field had been done. When Surajmal saw this he was wonder-struck but began to think of some other way, in which

he could harm Ajit. So when the King came he said : "Sire, your wheat has been harvested but after the work had been done I heard Ajit Singh boast in triumph, 'what the King's labourers could not do in a week I have done in a few hours! Thus I have humbled the proud King!' The man's vanity, sire, has reached the limit". The King said: "Then, what other task do you wish him to do". Surajmal said: "Sire, you need more water for the sowing so ask him to dig a dozen wells. That will benefit your Majesty and at the same time humble his pride." The King called his minister and said: "You have somehow managed to accomplish the two tasks given to you but now I want you to dig a dozen wells by tomorrow. If the wells are not ready by then, I will hand you over to the executioner." Ajit was very sad because digging even one well was beyond his power, to say nothing of twelve. While he was lost in thought he remembered the hermit's spade and when he came early the next day he brought it along with him. As soon as he had dug the first spadeful of earth, the spade slipped from his hand and in a second it had dug through a feet. Ajit did nothing but watch and even by noon all the wells had been dug. The courtiers were amazed to see this and said: "Surely this man is possessed of the devil ! But this time let us devise a plot by which we may of a certainty get rid of him." They got together and after consulting each other their leader Surajmal went to the King and said: "Sire, this Ajit is very clever. Why don't you send him to heaven so that he may find out if your Majesty's parents are living happily there." "How can he be sent to heaven?" the King asked puzzled. "It is easy sire," Surajmal said, "let faggots be placed and Ajit amidst them. Then let them be lighted, and ghee and aromatics poured and he will go to heaven riding upon the smoke !" This idea pleased the King who thought that when his minister had done so many difficult tasks he might also succeed in finding about his parents from heaven. So he ordered his men to start piling up the faggots of wood. Ajit protested in vain. When he saw no way out he arranged

so that the faggots would be piled over him, and meanwhile with the help of the magic spade he dug a tunnel from his home to the place of burning. When the King's courtiers set fire to the faggots they danced with joy for they knew that Ajit would be reduced to ashes. When the smoke began to rise they shouted lustily: "See, Ajit is going to heaven, riding on the smoke!" Hearing their shouts Ajit smiled and lowered himself into the tunnel.

After a month Ajit Singh presented himself at the *darbar*. By this time everyone had forgotten about him and his sight made Surajmal and the scheming courtiers tremble. They, alongwith the King and everyone present there, began to gaze at him speechless with their eyes transfixed. Ajit said: "Sir, your parents are well and happy. Your revered father is also King in heaven but he lacks an able and confiding minister. When I told him of the ingenious device by which Surajmal had conveyed me to heaven he expressed the desire that you should send him so that he could appoint him his chief minister and carry on his rule there with success". Hearing this the King said: "Let Surajmal speedily be sent to heaven for my father is in great need of him." Before he could collect his wits, the frightened Surajmal was put on a pile of faggots. The ghee was poured, and someone lighted the pyre. The King's men began to shout: "See Surajmal goes to heaven, riding upon the smoke!" The trip to heaven had indeed started for him, but this time there was no coming back!

9

A MOTHER'S LOVE

LONG long ago there lived a King and Queen who had only one daughter whom they loved dearly. It so happened that the Queen fell very ill and none of the physicians could cure her. When she knew that she was about to die she called the King and said : "See that my daughter remains always free from trouble."

When the Queen died, the King married again. He asked the new Queen to look after the child and became busy with affairs of the State. For some time the Queen treated the girl well, but as time passed her behaviour changed. She would beat her and keep her hungry so that the poor child became pale and thin and looked almost a skeleton.

One day the child asked for something to eat because she was feeling very hungry. Instead of giving her food the Queen gave her a sound beating. The poor girl went into the garden and began to sob. Suddenly she heard a voice which came from a tree, and when she looked up she saw a parrot sitting there. The parrot said : "Do not weep child. I am your mother and I have taken the form of parrot. I will bring you fruit and other good things to eat. So whenever you are hungry come and sit under this tree." The girl was happy, and began to appease her hunger with the fruits which the parrot gave her. Seeing that the child became plump and lovely each day the Queen began to suspect that someone was feeding her. So she sent her maid to find out. The maid hid in the garden and saw how the parrot fed the girl. She went to her mistress and told her everything. The Queen pretended to be ill and lay down on her

bed. When the King asked her what the matter was she said: There is a parrot who sits on the tree in front of my window and makes so much noise that I get a headache." The King said: "If that is so I will get it shot." The King's daughter was overhearing this conversation, and as soon as she knew this she ran to the tree and told the parrot everything. The parrot said: "Child, don't worry. Now I will become a goat and sit under this tree. Whenever you are hungry come to me, and I will give you milk." Now the girl began to drink the goat's milk. Seeing the girl keeping healthy the Queen was surprised, and sent the maid-servant again to find out who fed the child. The maid-servant hid in the garden and saw the goat feeding the King's daughter with her milk. She went back and told the Queen who again made a pretence of illness. The King asked her: "What is the matter with you that you are lying like that?" The Queen said: "The slightest noise causes my head to ache. There is a goat near my window which bleats the whole day and night and I can hardly sleep because of it." The King said: "Why do you worry, I will get it killed at once." The King's daughter who was hearing all this speedily ran to the goat and said: "Mother, now the Queen will get you killed." The goat said: "Never mind, child, I will become a field of corn. Whenever you are hungry, break one and roast it on the fire and eat it." Instantly the goat was killed, a large bit of the land behind the tree was covered with cobs of healthy corn. The girl would eat the corn whenever the Queen gave her no food. When she continued to be as plump as before, the Queen again sent the maid-servant to find out where the girl got the food. She hid behind the corn and saw her break a cob and take it away. She went to her mistress and told her. The Queen went to her bedroom and pretended to be very ill. "What is the matter?" the King anxiously asked her. "I don't get a moment's peace" the Queen said, first that infernal parrot, then the goat, and now see the corn has come up, and the birds keep pecking at it the whole day and making a noise. How can I sleep?"

The King said : "All right, I will order that the corn be uprooted and thrown away." He called his servants and ordered them to uproot all the corn. But when they went with their spades to do so they found that the earth was hard as stone! The spades made no impression upon it. The servants came back to the King and said : "Sire, the earth on which the corn has grown is hard as stone. Our spades have become dented and yet they could make no impression on it." The King said : "How can it be so hard, I will come and see for myself." He went along with the servants and when they reached the spot, asked them to dig the earth with their spades. But they simply could not do so. When he saw this he took a spade and struck it on the ground. As soon as he had done so, the King's first Queen appeared dressed in white and said : "O King! you had promised me that you would look well after my daughter, but the new Queen gives her great grief and keeps her hungry." Saying this she disappeared. The King was greatly shocked, and turned out the new Queen from his palace. Thereafter he began to look after the daughter himself.

THE HEAVENLY JOURNEY

IN a village in Mathura district there once lived a man called Anokhey. He was in the habit of playing tricks on everyone. One day the people of the village came in a body to his grand-uncle whom they held in great reverence and said: "Sir, Anokhey gives a lot of trouble to us. He has no consideration for time and place but plays his pranks on everyone old and young alike. Please tell him to stop, otherwise we will see he is punished." The old man said: "Don't worry, leave it to me. I will just now call him and ask him to lay off his pranks. He fears me a lot and cannot go against my order." Saying this he sent all the village people away. He went to Anokhey and said: "Young man, the people of the village do not like your pranks and they want to drive you out of the village. It is not good to annoy them. So listen to me and leave off doing this." All this sermon had no effect at all on the mischievous lad and he said in an insolent tone: "You seem to be easily led away by the village folk. How can they turn me out of the village? Besides, I don't hurt anyone. If they don't like my pranks I don't care, but I won't be cowed down. I have no fear of the village folk; let them do their worst. But tell them on my behalf that if they give me a hundred rupees I can entertain them with a genuine prank." The old man tried his best to convince Anokhey but when he found him adamant he went back, and collecting the village folk said: "This lad will not listen to me. He is bent on carrying on with his tricks, and to add to it he says that he can play a genuine prank if he is given a hundred rupees." Hearing this the people of the village were greatly surprised, and began to wonder

what a genuine prank could be. In the end their curiosity got the better of them. They collected a hundred rupees and giving the sum to the old man said: "We would like to see a genuine prank, so give Anokhey this money. But if he does not keep his part of the bargain we will give him a good beating." The old villager went running to Anokhey and said: "Son, the people of the village have sent you a hundred rupees. They are eager to see the genuine prank about which you told me. So make haste and show it to them otherwise they will give you a sound thrashing." Anokhey was very happy to get a hundred rupees in this way. He told his wife: "See my grand-uncle has brought me this money and has told me that the people of the village keenly desire to see a genuine prank. I will soon show it to them."

His wife said: "Why do you take on all this trouble. I fear the village folk may do you some harm. They are not at all pleased with your tricks. Why don't you return their money and forget about it?" Anokhey laughed at her words and said: "What a simpleton you are! You are fearing needlessly. If you do as I say I will buy you a number of ornaments and fine sarees." Hearing this his wife's face lit up with joy and she said: "Tell me quickly what you want me to do. I shall do it at once." Above all she wanted ornaments and sarees. Anokhey said: "Listen carefully to what I tell you. When you go to the village well to fill the pots with water today start weeping and bewailing. When your friends ask you what the matter is say that your husband is seriously ill and can't live through the night." The woman did as she was instructed. When she conveyed news of Anokhey's illness all her friends showed great concern and said: "May God spare him. He is a very jolly fellow and there's none like him in the village. He means well to everybody and amuses everyone by his pranks. May he get well." On this Anokhey's wife began to sob even louder. The women of the village all comforted her and sent her back. When she came home she told her husband that she had done as he wished.

It so happened that in the night a Muslim of the village died. Anokhey covered his own face and went along with the mourners when they took the dead body. After they had buried the man he quietly dug away the earth with a spade and with the help of his wife conveyed the corpse to his house. Then he covered it with a white *chadar* and put it in the verandah and told his wife: "If anyone tries to remove the cover to see the face of the corpse stop him and say that your late husband had desired that none should see his face after death, and if anyone did so some misfortune would surely befall him." Saying this he hid himself in a room. Soon news went round that Anokhey was dead and the village people began to flock to his house to condole. Whenever someone tried to lift the cloth which covered the body, his wife would say: "Pray don't. He wished that none should see his face after his death and I fear if you do so some ill may befall you." So the mourners prepared the funeral pyre and taking the dead body cremated it in the village. His grand-uncle bewailed the most, though at heart he was glad to get rid of the meddlesome lad!

After some days Anokhey went out of his house and knocked on the door of his grand-uncle. When he saw him the old man was greatly puzzled and said: "What! Who are you? You are dead, how are you here?" Anokhey laughed and said: "You are right about my dying. I died and went to heaven and it is from there that I am coming. I can hardly describe all the wonderful things there are in heaven. Fine mansions with deep luxurious beds and chairs, lovely gardens with coloured fountains playing, food such as I never tasted on earth, beautiful damsels who sing and dance and all the comforts you can imagine." Hearing this his grand-uncle felt greatly tempted, and said, "Son, the people of this village trouble me very much, I too would like to go with you to heaven and enjoy the bliss there." Anokhey said: "It's not so easy to get a place in heaven as you think. Many people are knocking about there for getting settled and they are prepared to pay handsomely. But I

have developed some contacts, so if you give me a hundred rupees I will try to get you a place." The old man was so charmed with the prospect of going to heaven that he fetched the money and handed it over to Anokhey, who said: "I will come tomorrow at the same time and if I succeed in getting a place I shall take you to heaven." After he had left his grand-uncle went to his wife and said: "That boy Anokhey came here just now." What nonsense are you talking," she said "how can dead man come back?" The old man said: "I am telling you the truth. He came back from heaven and has promised to get me a place there too. Do you know what heaven is like?" And he told his wife all that Anokhey had said. Hearing the praises of heaven the old woman began to be tempted and said, "Am I not the boy's great-aunt? He should have asked me first I'll set him right for ignoring me!" The old man said: "Why are you getting angry. The boy will come tomorrow at this time and then you may also ask him." When Anokhey came the next day the old woman shouted at him and said: "So you think you can leave me here! Am I not your great-aunt? In fact you should have offered to take me to heaven first." Anokhey said: "Mother, do you think it's an easy job to get a place in heaven? It is with great difficulty that I have got grand-uncle a place with the hundred rupees he gave me. Now there is hardly any left." The old woman went to her almirah and bringing out two hundred rupees said: "Take this money and make sure that I too get a place, otherwise I'll give you a sound thrashing." Anokhey pocketed the money and said: "All right, I'll try. If I get the place I will be here at mid-night. "Be ready to go on the journey."

In the evening Anokhey set out from home to arrange for the journey to heaven. On the way he saw a donkey tied to a peg outside a *dhobi's* house. He quietly released it and took it along with him. When he reached his grand-uncle's house he tied the ass to a tree and

went inside and said: "Hurry up, otherwise the place I have reserved for you in heaven will be filled up." When they were about to start he said, "I must warn you that the journey to heaven is by no means a comfortable one. The way is very rough, and it is almost as if one were riding on the back of a donkey. So while riding on the celestial car if you get such jerks and jolts, don't get frightened. Besides your heads will begin to whirl if you look down from the car so I will bind a cloth round your eyes." Saying this he bound the eyes of his uncle and aunt tightly with thick cloth so that they could not see and catching them by the hands led them out. Then he made his great-aunt sit on the donkey and making her catch one of its ears said: "Aunt catch hold of this tightly, for this is one of the tassels of the celestial car!" Thereafter he made his great uncle sit on the ass facing towards the back and putting its tail into his hands said: "Uncle, this is the rope of the celestial car, catch hold of it tightly." Thus cautioning both of them to keep sitting firmly on the donkey, he took it on the slope near a well where bullocks went up and down, and breaking a twig from a nearby tree gave it a tight smack on its haunches so that it began to bray and run up and down the slope. After sometime the donkey was out of breath, and as for the poor riders they were even more troubled than him, and by turns they kept on asking him: "Son, how far away is heaven now? I am tired of sitting on the celestial car." Anokhey laughed to himself when he heard them say so, but outwardly maintaining his calm each time answered: "A little more patience, we have almost reached!" After sometime he drove the donkey to his grand-uncle's door and said, "You know that the King of heaven is Dharmaraj. We have reached heaven's door and I am going to my place. Shout out for Dharmaraj and he will conduct you to yours." Saying this Anokhey vanished. The old man and his wife began calling out. "Dharmaraj! O! Dharmaraj!" but there was no response. So they began to wonder what had happened to him. Now Dharmaraj was also the name of their

son, who at this moment was fast asleep inside. When his wife heard the cries she woke him up and said: "Don't you hear your father calling. Get up and see what he wants." After much shaking up the boy went outside and was astounded to see his parents riding on the ass, the one clutching his ear and the other his tail, and he asked: "What is all this about?" His parents said: "O! King of heaven show us our place. See how long have we travelled in this celestial car to reach your kingdom!" The son Dharmaraj was filled with rage at his parents' stupidity, and uncovering their eyes said: "See the sort of celestial car in which you are sitting! Heaven indeed! Aren't you ashamed of yourselves to be sitting on a wretched donkey and making all this din. Get in and stop making all this foolish noise." His parents got down from the ass and began to blink with amazement. Instead of reaching heaven they had come back to their own house from where they had started and that too on a donkey! They began to weep and moan, "O! we have been tricked by Anokhey, that good for nothing scamp has robbed us of three hundred rupees. O!"

Next day the people of village came together and Anokhey was produced before them. When they heard about his prank they began to press him to return the money. But Anokhey said: "I told you before that I will play a genuine prank this time. Now why should I return the money. It is mine." The village folk could not dispute what he said, and were silent. Anokhey went his way laughing heartily.

THE SWEAT OF THE BROW

IN the olden days Bundelkhand was called Jejabhukti. Its earliest inhabitants were Gonds and Rajputs. Bundelkhand is a land full of hillocks and dense forests. Its natural scenery is very pleasing to the eyes. In the rainy season the red gritty soil absorbs all the water so there is little of the slush and mud which we usually find in the districts of Uttar Pradesh. Its people are brave and hard-working, especially the women and it was in Bundelkhand that the valorous Rani of Jhansi fought against the British. There is a very moving story which one hears in this part of Uttar Pradesh in which the dignity and godliness of labour is illustrated.

There once lived a *pundit* in a certain village of Jhansi district who was very simple in his habits and noble-minded. All men respected him. He would recite *Katha* and perform his priestly duties without any greed for money and return every evening with the few coins he got thereby. The *pundit* lived like a simple man and had few necessities but his wife, the *punditien*, was fastidious and fond of good living. She liked good clothes, fine living and prided in moving in high society. She was always egging the *pundit* to do some other work so that he could earn more.

One day while talking with her neighbour, the *punditien* came to know that the King of the city was very charitable man, and whoever went to him never returned empty-handed. Hearing this she said to the *pundit*: "The King of this place is very generous. Go to him, and I am sure he will give you a lot of wealth." The *pundit* said: "Kings gather their riches by sinful means.

So according to the *shastras* one should not partake of them." But the *punditien* would not listen to him and forced him to go and try his luck.

When the *pundit* went to the King's *darbar* he treated him with respect and offering him a seat said: "Tell me what I can do for you?" The *pundit* answered: "Sir I don't need any riches, I only want to have four pice of your own earning." The King said: "You are a strange man to ask for four pice. People ask for gold and precious stones when they come to me. You are insulting me by asking for four pice. So ask for something else." But the *pundit* stuck to his words and said: "No great King, I don't want your riches. They are tainted with sin. I only want four pice which you have earned by the sweat of your brow. More I do not want." Hearing the *pundit's* words the courtiers were hushed into silence and the King was greatly puzzled. After thinking for a few moments he said: "All right, I'll give you what you want but you'll have to come the day after tomorrow for it."

When the *pundit* returned home the *punditien* was all agog to know how he had fared and asked him eagerly: "What did the King give you?" The *pundit* said: "He has called me again the day after tomorrow." The *punditien* was overjoyed to hear this and said: "Very good. It seems he wishes to give you a lot of wealth, for if it had been little he could have given it today." And she began to look forward to the day.

Meanwhile the King was wondering how to get four pice of his own earning. He had never done any work himself and knew only how to give orders to others. So he was puzzled and did not know how to set about the matter. He spent the night thinking about this and when it was morning he bathed and put on torn and tattered clothes and stole out of the palace. After wandering about the city he saw a man standing on the

door-step of his house and asked him : "I am in need of some work. Can you give me some?" The man said, "Can you draw water. There is no pipe in my house and I get it from the public tap." The King agreed and the man handed him an earthen pot and mentioned to him to go out and fill water. Now the King was absolutely unused to hard work and so after a few trips from the tap to the man's house he was tired and perspiring. So he had to rest for a while which made the man exclaim: "If you work with this speed the tap will run dry and my water will remain unfilled. Hurry up !" The King took the pitcher and filling it with water, was carrying it unsteadily back when he lost control by reason of fatigue, and it fell down with a crash!" The man cursed and said, "I am sorry that I ever employed you! It is obvious that you are an ease-loving man and not fit for work. However take these four pice for what you have done, though really I ought not to give you anything at all seeing that you have broken my pitcher," and he threw four copper pice at the King. Picking up the four pice the King went stealthily through the lanes and entered the palace from behind. His body was aching all over and there were blisters on the palm of his hands but he had managed to get some money by the sweat of his brow and was happy.

Next morning when the King sat in his *darbar* as usual, the *pundit* came. He greeted him, and handing him the four pice said: "After great labour I have been able to get these four pice but you can be sure that they are of my earning." The *pundit* blessed him. When he was about to depart the King offered him much riches, but he said: "No Sir, these four pice are all that I want, for they are the earnings of honest toil." So saying he departed for his home. The *punditien* was eagerly awaiting his return. She was imagining in her mind the large amount of wealth that he would be bringing from the King. But when he came home and laying aside his *pothi* took out four pice from his pocket and handing it to her said, "See, this the King has given of his own

earning," she was aghast. Her face fell and she was filled with rage and disappointment. Taking the four pice she threw them angrily into the tulsi pot. The *pundit* was used to his wife's bad words so he quietly hung his *chaddar* on the peg, and picking up his *pothi* got engrossed himself in it.

After a few days four small plants sprouted in the tulsi pot in *punditji's* house. They were very beautiful and strong, so his wife let them be and began to water them. After some days lovely golden flowers began to grow on them and presently they were laden with beautiful round and shining grains, smooth and glistening brightly. These grains would drop all around in the evening and the *punditien* would sweep them into a heap and drop them in a corner of her room. She did not wish to throw them away as they looked so lovely that they were a feast for the eyes. One day a vegetable-seller came that way. The *punditien* bought some vegetables from her and instead of paying her gave her some of the fruits of the plants. The vegetable-seller was struck by their smoothness, glitter and laughingly took them. Thereafter whenever she came the *punditien* would give her some of those glittering grains.

The King's daughter was to be married, and the Queen was in need of some pearls of good size to make her a garland of double pearls. When the King's men went in search of pearls they were told that a grocer had some really good ones of unusual size. The King's men could hardly believe that a grocer could have pearls, but just to see they went to him. True enough, the grocer took out some pearls out of his box, which astounded them for they were of the best quality. When they asked the grocer where he got them from he said : "There is a vegetable-seller who comes to my house. I got them cheaply from her. It seems she does not know their value." The messengers were filled with curiosity and went to the vegetable-seller who told them that she had got them from a *pundit's* house. The messengers went

and told this to the King who called the *pundit*. Imagine his surprise when the *pundit* turned out to be the same as the one whom he had given four pice! The King showed him some of the pearls and asked, "Where did you get these from?" The *pundit* looked at them, and answered, "Sir, there is no dearth of these. You may have as many as you like. I have a tulsi pot in which there are four plants. Every evening a basketful of these fall from them. *Punditien* is tired of sweeping them away each day." The King was wonderstruck, and thought the *pundit* was under some delusion. "How can pearls grow on trees?" he said. "It is with great labour and peril that they can be got from the bottom of the ocean. If they grow on your trees, come and show me." The *pundit* took the King with him to his home. True enough, the shining grains were lying scattered all around the four trees and some were still glistening on them! The King's wonder knew no bounds and he asked: "*Punditji*, from where did you get the seeds of these plants?" The *pundit* gazed blankly at him and shook his head. He didn't know anything about them at all. Then someone suggested: "Let us dig down a little, and see from where they spring." Hearing this the *pundit* scratched off a little of the earth near the roots and imagine his surprise when he found that they had sprouted from four pice which were embedded in the pot! The *punditien* recognized them at once. "These are the four pice which you gave me when you came from the King's palace and which I threw into this pot," she said. The *pundit* told the King the whole story. The King was astounded to hear this. "If the labour of an hour can yield so wonderful a result," he exclaimed, "how much more the untiring labour of everyday! It has been truly said, 'Labour is the noblest *dharma*.'"

12

THE BENEVOLENT MOUSE

ONCE upon a time there was a far-sighted mouse who was always looking for an opportunity to do a good turn. One day he found a piece of firewood on the way which he took home and kept with him. Next day when he was wandering in the town he saw a poor old woman who was blowing and blowing in her *chulha* and weeping all the time. The mouse went to her and said: "Old woman, what makes you weep?" The old woman said: "I can't afford any firewood and so have to cook my meal on cow-dung cakes. Without wood they are not catching fire and the smoke is hurting my eyes. What should I do?" The mouse was moved by the trouble of the old woman and running up to his hole she got out the wood which he had stored carefully and gave it to the old woman so that she could cook her food. The woman dried her tears and joyfully made some chappatis. When she had made them she gave one to the mouse for the pains the mouse had taken.

The mouse was very happy at having done a good turn and was going along with the chappati when he saw a potter's small child who was lying naked on the ground crying because he had nothing to eat. His mother was scolding him and saying: "Be quiet you little brat. How can I prepare your food unless I finish my day's work? The *Sahukar* Sahib will not pay me if I don't deliver his flower pots today. "Be quiet I'll give you something to eat presently." But the child was very hungry and would not be comforted. When the mouse saw this he could not bear the child's cries of hunger, and gave him the chappati which he had got from the old woman. The potter's wife thanked the

kind mouse and in return for the chappati gave a nice earthen jar. The mouse who was very glad to get the jar, and happy to have helped the poor child, went along merrily rolling the pot in front of him singing :

“Roll O ! pot roll

A good deed

Is worth your weight in gold !”

He hadn't gone far when he saw a pond round which *dhobies* were washing their clothes. He would have gone past, were it not for the fact that two persons were quarrelling. They were a *dhobi* and his wife the *dhobin*. The *dhobi* was beating her with a stick and shouting at her while the poor *dhobin* was sobbing loudly. The mouse stopped to find out why they were quarrelling. The *dhobi* said : “This wretched woman has broken my pot in which I used to boil water to wash the clothes. Now what should I do? I don't have a single pice and I have to wash all these clothes today”. He pointed to a heap of dirty clothes lying before him. The mouse was filled with pity for the poor *dhobin*, especially as she was lean and thin and the bamboo stick marks were visible on her hands and wrists. So he gave the *dhobi* his earthen jar and said : “Don't beat the poor woman, she is so frail and weak. Here take this, and boil the water.” The *dhobi* was happy to get the pot, and thanking the mouse for kindness, gave a coat in return. The mouse took the coat and hoisting it up joyfully, went singing:

“A coat in winter will keep you warm;

But the warmth of a good deed

Is still more comforting, and lasts for long !”

The mouse went along further, and as soon as he had gone some distance he came across a tramp on horseback who was shivering with cold. The mouse stopped and was surprised to see him having a horse but

no warm clothes. He said : "Hullo friend, it is strange that you have money to buy a horse but none with which to buy yourself a coat". The man said : "My elder brother is very cruel. In order to take my property by force he has turned me out. He gave me no clothes and so I have only this shirt to wear as you see." The mouse was moved with pity to hear his tale and gave him the coat which he had got from the dhobi. The man thanked him very much, and said : "I have no use for this horse, for I am going to settle in the town which is hardly a mile yonder." Getting down, he gave the horse to the mouse. The mouse got on to the horse's back and went away singing :

"A horse is fast and takes you with speed

It has indeed much merit;

But for more is the value of a good deed."

He had gone a couple of miles when he came across a man dressed up as a bridegroom with a drum slung across his shoulders, sitting on the *pulia* with a downcast face. The mouse stopped the horse and said: "Brother, it seems you are going to get married, then why are you sad? Surely this drum you are taking is for merry making." The man said : "You have guessed a right mouse, I am going to marry but I have to reach by this evening for the ceremony, and I can't find any conveyance. That's why I am sad. If I don't reach in time the bride's people will become angry and go back." The mouse said : "Don't worry, take my horse, I have no need of it, and I can go walking." The youngman's face brightened on hearing the mouse's words, and catching the horse's bridle he jumped upon it. Then he said : "You have helped me very much. I can't offer you anything in return but here is my drum. Its sound is very musical and since I heard you singing when you came my way it may be a good accompaniment to your song. The mouse took the drum and wished the man good luck. Then she went along the village road beating upon it and singing:

“From the courtyard and I got a piece of wood,
The wood I gave to an old woman,
The woman gave me a chappati to eat;
The chappati I gave a potter’s child,
The potter gave me an earthen pot
Which I gave to a *dhobin* to wash her clothes;
The *dhobin* gave me a woollen coat
Which warmed a man on a horse who was
shivering;
The man gave me his horse to ride,
And the horse took a bridegroom in time for his
wedding;
In return he gave me this drum, this drum
And so rub-a-dub! I march on singing!”

THE SIMPLETON

IN a certain village in the hill district of Almora there once lived a simpleton called Bhulua. His wife wanted to invite her sister one day and she asked him to go to her father's place and bring her. On the eve of his departure, when Bhulua was sitting in his room puffing on the hookah, his cousins came and noticing his luggage asked him : "Where are you going?" Bhulua said : "I am going to my in-laws to fetch my sister-in-law." The cousins said; "We know you are a simpleton, so be careful about your conduct in your father-in-law's house, otherwise you will have no end of trouble." "What should I do?" Bhulua asked. His cousins said : "If you meet anyone on the way you should greet him heartily in a loud voice and say, 'Namastey.' When you are at your in-law's, don't speak more than what is necessary, otherwise you may say something foolish. Just say 'Yes' or 'No', as occasion may require." Bhulua promised to do as he was told, and next day set out on his journey.



On the way he came across a fowler who had spread his net to catch birds. By chance when he reached there the birds had entered the net and the fowler was about to close the net when Bhulua stood near and said in a loud voice: '*Namastey, bhai, Namastey!*' The fowler was startled, and so were the birds, much to his annoyance the birds escaped. The fowler gave him a sound beating for having driven off his birds, and said: "What a fool you are to come bungling into my business. Now where shall I get my birds from?" Bhulua answered: "This was what I was told to say but I see that it does not seem to be the right thing. Pray tell me what I should say then?" The fowler said: "You should say: Keep on coming and getting caught." Bhulua said: "All right, next time I will say this," and went on. He had gone a mile or so when he met some thieves who were returning after having committed a theft. As soon as he saw them Bhulua said: "Keep on coming, and getting caught!" Hearing these words of ill-omen the thieves caught hold of him gave him a good thrashing. One of them brandished a dagger and said: "We have let you off cheaply this time, but if you ever speak thus again we will put this through you." Bhulua said in a trembling voice: "Sir, I didn't mean any ill but it seems I haven't said the correct thing. Tell me, what should I say." The thieves said: "You should say, "Continue to bring and deposit." Bhulua made a note of this and proceeded on his journey. After going some distance he came across a funeral procession. The words of the thieves were fresh in his mind and greeting them he said: "Friends, may you continue to bring and deposit!" Hearing this unkind remark the relations of the dead man abused him and were about to give him a beating, when he shouted: "Stop! stop! I mean no ill. Some one advised me to say this to anyone I meet on the way. If this is not right, tell me what am I to say?" The men said: "You should say, "May this never happen." Bhulua thanked them for the advice and proceeded on. Soon he saw a marriage procession come that way, and

keeping in mind what he had been told he said : "Friends, may this never happen!" The men in the marriage procession were shocked to hear his ill-timed words and began to beat him with their fists. This time sense dawned on poor Bhulua, and he did not ask for any more advice!

At last he arrived at the house of his father-in-law. He was given a hearty welcome and after he had refreshed himself with tea and sweets his mother-in-law asked him : "Son, does it go all well with you?" Bhulua remembered the advice given by his cousins and said : "Yes."

"Is my daughter all right?" she asked.

"No," replied Bhulua.

Hearing this the old woman was worried. "Is she sick?" she asked him.

"Yes" said Bhulua, seeing that he had already answered "no" to the previous question.

"Is she not improving?" his mother-in-law asked anxiously.

"No," replied he.

The old woman began to fear the worst, and thought that Bhulua was speaking briefly because he wanted to break the news gently. She asked him breathlessly, "Is she dead?"

"Yes," replied Bhulua.

Hearing this his mother-in-law screamed and fainted. People ran from all side and sprinkled water on her face. When she revived they asked her what it was all about. She pointed to her son-in-law and said : "He has brought the news of my daughter's death," and began to weep. But her husband did not believe her, for only a day back he had got a letter informing him that she was well, so he asked Bhulua : "Is my daughter really dead?"

"No,, said he, to the relief of them all!

THE MAGIC BEDSTEAD

ONCE upon a time there lived a carpenter called Sital who would not work with the result that he and his family starved. One day his mother said: "Son, you don't earn a single pice, how shall we live? As for me, I am old and I don't need any money, but what about your wife and your children? They have neither food to eat nor clothes to keep out the cold. At least for their sake you should do something worthwhile." Sital was a sensitive man and his mother's words made him feel very much ashamed of himself. So he took out his tools and set to work on a bedstead. He was so engrossed in it that he forgot food and drink and kept making it day and night. Thus working on it for a few days he made a very beautiful bedstead which had four wooden soldiers, one on each side of it. What was wonderful about them was, that they could move about and talk like human beings! Sital took the bedstead to the king's palace and began to shout:

"Only he who wakes, gets anything;

He who sleeps, loses:

Buy a bedstead! a wonderful bedstead!"

Hearing this the King sent for the carpenter and had a look at the bedstead. He saw that it was well made and asked its price. Sital said, "Sire, I will take nothing for it. If it pleases your fancy, and it is to your liking, you may send for Sital carpenter who lives in Barhai ki Gali!" Saying this he bowed and departed.

Sital's mother was eagerly awaiting his return. She was imagining in her mind the riches and the re-

wards which he would be bringing with him. But when she saw him return again empty handed she was greatly disappointed, and asked him, "Son, how did it happen that the King kept such a splendid bedstead without paying anything for it?" Sital said: "Mother, the King was paying me its price, but myself asked him to use it first, and then give me whatever he wished." His mother laughed at his simplicity and said: "Son, you have done a foolish thing indeed! A King's mood is very uncertain. He can be pleased one moment and angry the next. God knows what he will finally decide about it. Besides, you know the saying 'A bird in hand is worth two in the bush.'" Sital said: "Mother, now I have left the bedstead with the King I can't possibly bring it back. Let us hope for the best."

Meanwhile the King got the bedstead placed in his bedroom and lay on it. His mind was burdened with some affair of the State, so sleep eluded him, and he remained awake far into the night. When it was midnight the first soldier came out of the bedstead and said to the other three soldiers: "Now you look after the bedstead, tonight I will make a round of the kingdom and find out who is happy and who is not." They replied: "Don't worry we will remain here and guard the bedstead." The soldier went away. When he was out on the street he saw a demon wandering about roaring loudly. The soldier asked him, "Where are you going?" The demon frowned on him and said: "Mind your own business. I go wherever I please. I have eaten many human beings, today I go to devour the King." The soldier said: "I am the King's guard. You will have to fight with me first if you want to kill him. Come on, let me see your strength!" As soon as he heard the soldier's challenge, the demon pounced upon him but the soldier was ready for the move and jumped aside. The demon went sprawling on the ground, and drawing his sword, the soldier hacked him to pieces. After having killed the demon the soldier went back and took his place on the bedstead. One of the other soldiers

said: "Friend, tell of us what happened when you were on your round." The soldier answered: "Today I killed the demon who had created a terror in the kingdom. He had devoured many men. I met him on the crossing and slew him with my sword. Now the king's subjects are rid of him for ever!" "Well done," the other soldier said, "but was made you fight him? Did he challenge you?" The first soldier said: "No, in fact it was I who challenged him. He was on his way to kill our King today!" Hearing this talk the King rose up, and calling the watchman of the palace sent them to the road crossing to verify what the soldier had said. The messengers returned and told him that indeed the demon was lying dead there.

Next morning as soon as the King rose, he called Sital, the carpenter, and giving him a cartload of gold, pearls, and precious stones, said: "Take this; your bedstead is priceless, and I am very happy to have bought it from you."

When it was night the King again went and lay down on the bed. This time he deliberately kept awake for the incident of the previous night had excited his curiosity. As soon as it was twelve the second soldier took leave of his companions and got ready to go on his round. As soon as he stepped down from the bedstead his gaze fell on the King's slippers and he was horrified to see a black cobra sitting on them. The soldier drew his sword and hacked it into bits. Then he put the slippers back in their proper place, and went back to his position on the bedstead. Seeing him come back so soon, the first soldier said in an astonished voice, "Hello! you have come back very early!" "Brothers, the second soldier said: "I haven't been out of the palace at all. As soon as I stepped down I saw a deadly snake lying over the King's slippers. So I slew it and came back. I believe I have done as praiseworthy a work as you; have I not?" Certainly, the first soldier said: "You have saved the King's life!"

The King was very much surprised to hear this talk and getting up from the bed he took a lamp and flashed it on the floor. Sure enough, the bits of the slain snake were lying near his slippers! Next morning he sent two cartloads of riches to the carpenter.

The third night it was the turn of the third soldier. He said: "Friends, now I am going on my round. Keep guarding the bedstead during my absence. When the soldier reached the portion of the palace containing the King's treasury he found four thieves breaking into the wall. He stood by silently in the dark, and began to watch what they were doing. As soon as the wall was breached three of the thieves went inside, while one remained out guarding the breach. The thieves collected all the wealth of the King's treasury and stuffed it into bags. Meanwhile the soldier crept up to the thief who was on guard, and drove his sword into his stomach. The thief fell down dead without uttering a word. The soldier stationed himself near the breach which was big enough only to admit one man at a time. The thieves came out one by one. The soldier kept on hacking off their heads as soon as they stepped out of the breach, so that he killed all of them. Having done so, and conveying the sacks inside, he closed the hole in the wall, and going back, took his place on the bedstead. Seeing him arrive so late, the other soldiers asked him: "Friend, where were you all this time? We had almost given you up for lost!" The soldier said: "It is true I have been away for long and it is almost daybreak but I have done a very useful piece of work. Four thieves were looting the King's treasury. I killed all of them and put all the money and precious stones back." The other soldiers were very happy to hear this and said: "Well done, comrade! you have indeed done a wonderful work, having killed four thieves single-handed." The King, who was listening spellbound to this talk at once got up and went to see for himself. True enough, he saw the four thieves lying slain and all the wealth tied up in sacks, but safe. Next morning he again called

Sital, the carpenter and said : "Your bedstead is really priceless. Whatever I gave you for it is little." Saying this he gave him a necklace of diamonds and precious stones, and much gold, and sent him away.

On the fourth night the King lay awake to find out what happened. The carpenter's words : 'Only he who wakes gets anything; he who sleeps loses', came to his mind. While he was thinking over this, he saw the fourth soldier leave the bedstead and go on his round. He came across a stranger fully armed, trying to jump through the window. The soldier challenged him and said : "Who are you?" The stranger said in a haughty voice : "What is that to you? Keep out of the way or I shall make short work of you. I am going to kill the King for he is my mortal enemy." "I see", the soldier said mockingly, "That's why you are entering like a thief. If you were a brave man you would not try to kill one who is asleep but meet him in open fight. What a coward you are! The stranger's face became red with anger and he said : "It seems your time is up. If you speak a word I will kill you like a dog." "Then let us see who kills whom" the soldier said, drawing his sword. The two flew at each other, and began to fight fiercely. Soon the stranger began to lose ground, and the soldier pushed him nearer the wall with each slash of his sword. He gave him no quarter and with one swift lunge pierced him through and through. The stranger fell on the ground and was dead. The valiant soldier wiped his sword and went back to the King's bedstead. His companions said : "You look very happy brother, what have you done this night?" The soldier said: "I have reason to feel happy, for I have just now killed the King's mortal foe who was coming through the window to murder him." The other soldiers exclaimed : "Well done! now the King will have some peace." Hearing this the King got up with a start and leant out of the window. Sure enough he recognized his enemy lying

dead in the lamp's light. The sight gave him great joy, for now he need have no fear from his foe.

As soon as it was daybreak, the King called Sital again and said; "I can never pay you the price of this matchless bedstead, my friend. The four soldiers you have placed upon it have saved not only my kingdom but my life as well. Therefore I make you my chief minister, and shall ever count you as my friend." Saying this, he embraced him and gave him many gifts. After staying some time with the King, Sital went home and gave the good news to his mother and his wife.

THE CLEVER JACKAL

THERE was once a jackal who lived under a tree with his mate, and his young ones. He had no regular place to live in, and when winter came, and his young ones began to shiver in the cold, he began to search for a place in which he could provide them shelter. Much as he searched, he could find no place, and so going to his father he said: "My mate and my children will die in the cold if they don't get a place to live in. Please do something about it." The father jackal thought over it and said: "All right, I will build a house for your mate and children in the jungle." This set the jackal's mind at rest and he began to hope for a dwelling place soon. But when many days passed and his young ones were still under the tree he went to his father and asked him about the house. Now father jackal was very lazy and instead of building the house as he had promised, he slept the whole day! So when he was asked about it, he made an excuse saying: "Son, I had started digging a house for you but I am sorry to say that the earth caved in, and now I have to do it all over again." The jackal said: "All right, but please hurry, or my children will die of cold." After a few days again the jackal asked about the progress of the house and his father gave the same old reply. The jackal's mate was very angry at his not being able to provide a house, and said: "If you don't make arrangement for one soon, I'll run away for I can't bear to see my children die." Having been heckled like this the jackal got worried. One day while he was returning from his round he saw a tiger's den which was empty because the tiger had gone out in search of prey. Being desperate because of not finding a home, he went to his mate and children and said: "I have found a house for you at last. Come with me." He led them to the tiger's den, and when they were safely in, he said to his mate: "When I lift my leg, bite the cubs sharply so that they begin to cry." His mate pro-

mised to do so. Then he told his cubs: "When you cry, and your mother asks you why you are crying, say that you don't want the stale flesh which you got yesterday but the flesh of the newly killed tiger." The cubs nodded their heads. They thought the pretence great fun!

When it was evening and the time neared for the return of the tiger, the jackal took up a position at the entrance of the den. Soon the tiger came ambling along. As soon as he neared his den he saw the jackal standing there, and fuming with rage, was about to spring when the jackal lifted his leg and gave the signal. Instantly the mother jackal bit her cubs and they began to cry. Before the tiger could recover his wits, the jackal asked loudly: "What is this din about? Why are the young one's crying?" Taking the cue, the female jackal replied in a loud voice so that the tiger could hear: "they are crying because they don't want to eat the stale flesh of the tiger killed yesterday. They want fresh tiger meat." Hearing these words the tiger thought there was someone mightier than he in the den, and fled away to a distant jungle to save his life. He never again troubled the jackal and his young ones.

THE HURRICANE

ONCE upon a time there lived an old woman in a jungle. Her son, who lived with her, used to graze cattle in the jungle. One day the woman shouted loudly to him and said: "Son! come home quickly, a hurricane is coming!" Now by chance there was a leopard hiding nearby waiting to carry off a calf if he could get one. When he heard what the old woman said he was greatly puzzled, for he had never heard of a 'hurricane'. So he determined to find out from her what it meant. With this object in view he hid himself amongst the calves and along with them entered the fold.

While the leopard was hiding amongst the calves, three thieves crept inside in order to steal a calf. When they began to feel in the dark, they mistook the leopard for a calf, and whispered amongst themselves: "What a big fat calf he is. The healthiest of the lot!" So they put a rope round his neck and led him away. The leopard was still afraid in his mind about the hurricane because he had not yet found solution to his problem and so he meekly submitted. When it was daylight, the thieves found, much to their surprise, that the animal they had roped along was not a calf but a leopard! So they let go the rope and ran and climbed up into the hollow trunk of a dried tree, in order to escape from the leopard. The leopard, however, had other thoughts in his mind than attacking the thieves, and fled away into the forest. While he was running a bear met him and said: "Brother leopard, where are you off so fast? It seems some enemy is after you." The leopard replied: O! bear, I'm running away from the hurricane. I've just escaped him and I

don't want to come into his clutches." The bear said: "I think you are alarmed needlessly. Who can defeat such brave beasts as us? Show me this 'hurricane' and I will fight him." The leopard said: "All right, come I will show him to you." Saying this he led him to the hollow tree where he thought the hurricane was lying hidden. The bear climbed up the tree trunk and dropped in his tail to explore. The thieves caught hold of the bear's tail and tugged with all their might. In the tussle the bear's tail got scratched against the tree trunk and bruised. It was with great difficulty that he could get it free, and when he did so, he ran as fast as he could with the leopard by his side. On the way they met a tiger, who seeing them running in fear, stopped them and said: "Where are you two running away so fast? From your faces I can see you are frightened of something." "So we are," the leopard answered, "and it is of the hurricane. He's very fierce and terrifying. Isn't he so, brother bear?" The bear nodded and said: "So he is, and that's why we want to run away as far as we can from him." The tiger laughed at them and said: "It seems both of you have lost your wits. Now I have lived in this forest for so many years and I never saw this hurricane. Can you tell me what's he like?" The bear showed the tiger his bruised tail and said: "This is what the hurricane did to it. He seems to me to be a sort of dragging thing." The tiger said: "If you show him to me I will settle him once for all." The leopard and the bear said: "Come." And all the three beasts started off towards the hollow tree.

Seeing the tiger along with the leopard and the bear, the thieves were frightened that they would tear up the hollow tree, and so climbed it up and perched on the top. The tiger came close and roared so frightfully that they were terrified, and one of them fell down on the tiger's back. The thief, out of fear, clasped him so tightly, that thinking he was being ridden by a demon, the tiger began to run as fast as he could. The thief was

thrown off and rolled into the forest. When all the three beasts had reached a safe distance, they congratulated one another on their escape. The tiger grumbled at the bear and said: "You told me this 'hurricane' was a kind of dragging thing, but he is nothing of the sort. He is a rider of beasts. If I had known this before, I wouldn't have meddled with him." The bear kept quiet, for he sensed that the tiger was in bad mood. Having escaped the hurricane he did not want to fall victim to a tiger!

THE POT OF GHEE

WHEN Sheikh Chillī was a young lad, his mother once said: "Son, now you should do some work and earn your livelihood. Soon you will be married and then you will have to stand on your legs." Sheikhji replied: "Mother, how you prattle! Do you think I am standing on borrowed legs?"

Next day Sheikhji went to the bazar in search of work. There he met a *Seth* who asked him. "Young man, is there a labourer to be found here?" Sheikhji at once said: "Why not? I am at your service. Say, what do you want me to do?". The *Seth* said: "I want this pot of ghee carried home. I can pay you two pice for this. Are you willing to take it?"

Hearing this Sheikhji thought in his mind that it was small sum which the *Seth* offered as wages but he wanted to earn something to start with and so he agreed. So he kept the earthen pot on his head and went along with the *Seth*. While he was going along he started musing thus: "Today when I get my two pice I will not spend them but buy an egg. I will keep it in the kite's nest which is on the *neem* tree in the middle of my courtyard. After some days a chick will come out from the egg, which I will bring up with care. When the hen is old enough she will lay eggs which I will collect and get hatched. In this way I will have thousands of hens, and with them I will open a big poultry farm, and supply eggs to distant places. From the profit I make on the farm I will buy some cows and buffaloes and thus I will also start a dairy farm.

When I have so much wealth I will be counted amongst the rich *Seths* of the town, and rich men will be eager to marry their daughters to me. I will marry the daughter of some *nawab*, but before I bring my wife home I will have to get a grand palace built for her. As I will be a big man, Rajas and Maharajas will be often visiting me, so I will have to build a really grand palace! Its walls will be studded with precious gems and it will be of marble and glimmer like the Taj Mahal. People will come from afar just to see my palace."

While Sheikhji was going along the road lost in these thoughts, it so happened that he stepped on a banana skin, and fell down with a thump on the road. The earthen pot was smashed into bits, and all the ghee in it spilt on the road.

The *Seth* looked back and was aghast to see all his ghee gone. He shouted at the Sheikh: "Idiot, see what you have done! You have caused me a great loss. Couldn't you walk carefully." The Sheikh Chilli flared up and said: "You are shouting your head off because of the loss a petty pot of ghee, and you think nothing of me who have lost all my wealth, servants, wife, sons, my magnificent palace! Oh! what shall I do?" Saying this Sheikh Chilli began to sob uncontrollably. The *Seth* learnt his story and was convinced that he had hired a mad man and went away muttering, while Sheikhji's tears kept flowing for a long time.

THE gods had assembled in the *darbar* of Indra to celebrate Dewali and to play the game of dice with ivory die. Indra, the king of the gods, said. "I agree that we should play dice but unfortunately my ivory die is with Krishna, King of Dwarka. If the Wind-god goes to Dwarka and gets it we can celebrate Dewali and worship Lakshmiji.

The Wind-god reached Dwarka in just a few moments. Krishna was sitting on his throne surrounded by his attendants and courtiers. The Wind-god saluted him and asked him for the die. Krishna said: "The die which was with me has somehow been misplaced by Queen Rukmini. We ourselves wanted to play dice but could not do so because of this." "Maharaj," the Wind-god said, "there are many gods from all the quarters gathered together in Indra's *darbar* who will worship Lakshmiji only after playing dice with the ivory die. If I go empty-handed everyone will consider this to be an inauspicious omen." Krishna thought this over for a few moments and said: "It is a very difficult situation! There is only one way out. Queen Motimala of Kamarupa country has an ivory die just like the one I had. But she does not permit anyone to come back without playing dice with her and till today no one has ever defeated her. Is there any warrior amongst the Yadavas who can bring the ivory die from her?" No one offered himself to go on such a dangerous mission for it was known that if Motimala defeated anyone in the game of dice she made him her slave. Krishna said to the Wind-god: "Stay till tomorrow as my guest and if no one agrees to go to Kamarupa country I will go myself and get it."

In the evening it so happened that Krishna's younger brother, Brahma Kanwal, was going along with his *bhabhi* (brother's wife) when he thought to tease her, and suddenly called out "Myaun!" Rukmini got frightened, and Brahma Kanwal laughed and said: "Fie on you, *bhabhi*! Such a small thing made you afraid!" Rukmini was hurt and said: "What about you? When Krishna asked if there was anyone in the assembly who could fetch the die you did not have the courage to offer yourself, and you go about frightening women!" These words of his *bhabhi* ruffled Brahma Kanwal and he vowed to go and get the die. When Krishna heard of it he tried his best to dissuade him but Brahma Kanwal was adamant and set out for the Kamarupa country. Krishna said: "All right you may go. But since you have not obeyed me I will not come to your help if you need it!"

At the gate of Motimala's palace there was a drum and an inscription on the wall: "Whoever wishes to play dice with Queen Motimala let him sound this drum." Brahma Kanwal sounded the drum loudly, and as soon as he had done so, four soldiers came, and led him into the palace hall. Brahma Kanwal introduced himself and the two sat down to play dice, the Queen offering him a clean and costly carpet to sit on, while she herself sat on a dirty rag. Brahma Kanwal staked his wealth, his share of the kingdom, and even himself, but each time he lost. There only remained his girdle—which had been given by his mother—that he didn't agree to part with. Motimala laughed and went away. Her soldiers pierced Brahma Kanwal's nose with a thorn and cast him into a damp and dark dungeon full of mosquitoes and scorpions.

In the night he had a dream. He saw his mother, Devaki beckoning to him. She said: "Kanwal, don't lose heart. Tomorrow morning play dice again with Motimala with the girdle which I gave you as stake, and

take care to sit on the dirty carpet. That is the secret of Motimala's victory." Next day Brahma Kanwal called the keeper of the dungeon and asked him to convey his request. Motimala took out the dice-board and prepared to play. She was delighted to know that she would humble her adversary completely by winning the girdle as well. When she was about to sit on her dirty carpet, Brahma Kanwal stopped her and said: "I am your slave now, so I must sit on this dirty bit of carpet. You sit on the other one." Motimala tried her best to dissuade him but he went and sat on the dirty carpet and would not get up. They began to play. This time it was Motimala who lost. Brahma Kanwal won back everything. When Motimala saw herself beaten she taunted Brahma Kanwal and said: "If you return alone to Dwarka your *bhabhi* will make fun of you. Why don't you wed me and take me along?" Brahma Kanwal said: "I'll never marry a woman who gambles. "Then, if you are a courageous man get for yourself the famous Chandramala," she said, "There is none like her in beauty." Brahma Kanwal's pride was hurt and he decided to wed Chandramala. He sent the ivory die to Krishna through a messenger and also a message that he was going to wed Chandramala.

Lovely Chandramala whose beauty no woman in the three worlds could equal, was the wife of Chandragiri Naga, who was the poisonous Kali Naga's brother. Chandragiri would guard her with his fifty-two heads when he was at home, and when he was not, he left behind the articles he used so that if anyone else even touched them they would warn him.

Brahma Kanwal went to Chandramala's door and played on his pipe. The melodious notes reached her ears and she said: "Who is it?" "Tis I, Brahma Kanwal brother of Krishna, King of Dwarka," he said, "My husband is not at home," she said, "and you.....you are the brother of Krishna who humbled and insulted

my *jeth* Kali Naga! No! no! I'll not let you in, you are the brother of my enemy!" She went away from the door but a strange curiosity to see this young man who played so well on the pipe haunted her. At length she could no more resist the temptation to see him once. She hid on the roof and looked on him. Brahma Kanwal's beauty intoxicated her. She hardly knew what she was doing and opening the door let him in. He said: "I have eaten nothing for three days. Give me something to eat." Chandramala began to cook food for him. When it was ready she served him the food. Brahma Kanwal asked: "There are some dishes of gold set apart. Why?" Chandramala answered: "These are for my husband, Chandragiri Naga. If anyone else eats in them they begin to ring and their sound reaches him wherever he is." Brahma Kanwal said: "I will eat in the gold plates. Put my food in them." Chandramala tried her best to dissuade him but he didn't listen. At last she put his food in the plates of gold and he began to eat. As soon as he put the first morsel in his mouth the plates began to ring. Their sound reached Chandragiri Naga far away. He said to his brother: "Today an enemy of mine has entered my house and is dining in my plates."

Kali Naga said: "You must not have cleaned your ears for long! It is perhaps the sound of the wind you hear." Meanwhile, after Brahma Kanwal had eaten, he prepared to go to sleep. He saw a big handsome bed and asked Chandramala: "Whose bed is this?" "My husband's," she said, "but pray don't sleep on it, for there are four wooden messengers on its corners. If anyone other than my husband sleeps on it, they will fly off and tell him." Brahma Kanwal said: "I don't care, I will sleep on it." He lay down on the bed. The messengers flew off.

The messengers shouted, "Chandragiri! Chandragiri! a stranger is sleeping on your bed!" Chandragiri turned to Kali Naga and said: "I told you before some-

one had entered my house but you wouldn't believe it. Now see the messengers of the bed themselves have come." The brothers hastened home. Chandragiri went in first and saw the handsome Brahma Kanwal asleep on his bed. He seemed as beautiful as the new moon. Chandragiri gazed and gazed. He was bewitched by the lad's beauty and forgot to put his poisonous fangs in him.

He came out and said to Kali Naga: "Brother, he is too handsome to be killed. I can't harden my heart to do it." "Who is it!" Kali Naga asked. "Tis Brahma Kanwal, the younger brother of Krishna of Dwarka." Kali Naga hissed with rage. "The brother of my enemy!" he said. "I will surely kill him. You are a fool to let him go." Chandragiri said: "All right I will go and bite him." He went and quietly put his fang into the sleeping lad's sole. Brahma Kanwal shrieked out. The poison was spreading through his body. In an instant he turned blue. "Chandramala!" he said, "put me in the salt cellar so that my body may not rot. Some day Krishna will surely come and bring me to life." Saying this he died.

In Dwarka mother Devaki saw a fearful vision. Brahma Kanwal, her beloved son, was saying, "Mother, my enemy Chandragiri has bitten me. My body is lying in his house." Devaki wept and said: "Krishna! my dear son! Chandragiri has bitten my beloved Brahma Kanwal! Krishna, go and revive him." Krishna smiled and said: "How long shall I go about reviving your sons, Mother? Besides, your daughter-in-law, Rukmini, does not wish that Kanwal should come back."

"No! no!" Rukmini said, putting her finger on his lips. "May he who wish so go to hell. Kanwal is my most beloved *devar*. Had I known this I would never have uttered the taunt. Go and revive my Kanwal or I will myself give up my life." She began to weep.

Then Krishna said: "Don't weep Rukmini. You will see your beloved Kanwal's face before tomorrow morning." At the middle of night Krishna, the Bestower of life and death seated himself on his favourite vehicle, Garuda, and flew away to the Naga country.

Chandramala was weeping aloud for the dead Kanwal. Chandragiri said angrily: "You vile woman, you are bewailing the death of our enemy. I will send you also where he is!" Saying this, he hissed fiercely and moved to strike Chandramala. But as soon as he struck it seemed he had put his tongue into a burning furnace! He saw with wide eyes that his life-destroying poison had become a flower and was lying in the hand of Krishna! Seeing him both Kali Naga and Chandragiri ran. Then Krishna beckoned to Garuda, who at once came, and putting his talons around Chandragiri flew aloft with him towards the sky. When he had flown up some distance he asked: "Chandragiri, can you see your Naga country from here?"

"Yes, enemy of snakes!" Chandragiri said, "I can see my Naga country. Till I see it desire for life will remain in me. So, O! king of birds take me to a height from where I can see neither the Naga country nor my palace of fifty-two windows." Garuda took him higher up and asked: "Now can you see your Naga country and your palace of fifty-two windows?"

"No, king of birds", Chandragiri said. Garuda released him.

Reviving Brahma Kanwal, and taking Chandramala with him, Lord Krishna left for Dwarka. Halting in the way Brahma Kanwal freed Motimala from the dungeon and said: "See, I have brought Chandramala as my queen. Now you also come with me and be her serving maid." Mother Devaki welcomed Chandramala as her daughter-in-law and the people of Dwarka celebrated Brahma Kanwal's home-coming by burning lamps of ghee.

SHEIKH CHILLI EARNS A LIVING

ONCE Sheikh Chilli went out to earn a living. He reached a certain town and was employed by a cloth merchant. The merchant gave him a piece of cloth and said: "Go and sell this in the market. I will give you a commission out of the profit I make." Sheikhi asked: "At what rate should I sell it?" The merchant answered: "Sell it at two pice above or below," meaning thereby at a rate above its cost price. Sheikhi went away with the cloth and sat in the market-place. When any customer came, and asked the price, he would say: "Not a pie less than two pice above and two pice below."



People would take Sheikhji's remark as a joke, and smile and pass on, but one of them guessed that it was due to foolishness and he kept four pice on his open palm, two above and two below, and gave them to him. Sheikhji handed over the cloth to him, glad to be able to effect a sale so promptly.

Now he started feeling hungry, so he bought bread for the four pice he had earned, and sat down to eat it. While he was about to do so, a dog came there and pouncing upon it ran away. Dying with hunger, Sheikhji went to the merchant and said: "You gave me only one piece of cloth, if you had given me ten or twenty pieces I could have sold them all." The merchant said: "I'll give you more tomorrow, give me the money for which you sold the cloth." Sheikhji said: "A dog ate up the bread which I bought with that money, I swear I did not even have a taste of it!"

Hearing this reply the merchant shouted at him and said: "What nonsense are you talking? Go and bring my money at once, or I shall give you such a beating as you'll remember all your life!" Off went Sheikh Chilli in search of the dog, and after a long search he found him licking a leaf-plate in front of a *halwai's* shop. He sprang towards the dog and shouted: "Cur! give me back my money!" The dog ran away as fast as it could and rushed into the house of a rich man. The Sheikh followed it mindlessly. The rich man had been counting his money, and had just gone inside his house for a moment. His almirah was open. The Sheikh lifted a bundle of notes, and ran out. He went to the cloth merchant and gave them to him. The merchant was overjoyed to find that he had sold the cloth for such a big amount and giving him his commission sent him away.

Soon the police, who were trying to find out about the theft, were on Sheikhji's heels. A constable caught

hold of him and questioned him: "Did you commit theft at the house of the *rais*?" "Yes," answered the Sheikh Chilli. "When did you do it?" the constable asked him. "The day when I ran after the dog," he answered. "And when did you run after the dog?" the constable asked expectantly. "The day I committed the theft!" was Sheikhji's reply. The constable was puzzled. He asked again: "Where is your house?" Sheikhji answered readily: "In front of the mosque." "And where is the mosque?" the constable asked him. "In front of my house!" Sheikhji said truthfully. The constable had one more try. "All right," he said, "tell me where the two are—your house *and* the mosque." Sheikhji looked brightly at him and said: "In front of each other!" The constable was now convinced that there was something wrong with Sheikhji's mind. He turned away in disgust and went off.

THE FOUR FAIRIES

ONCE upon a time there lived a villager who was extremely lazy and detested work. As a result he was always hard up. One day his wife got very angry and said: "If you don't go out and earn anything I will poison the children, and after setting fire to the house, jump into a well." Hearing her threat the villager got ready to go out and earn something. When he was about to depart, his wife, out of compassion for him, prepared four chappaties for him to eat and tied them in his scarf.

The villager went on and on by the main road. After going a long distance he got tired and sat down on the platform of a well. It was almost evening and he felt hungry. He thought if he ate up all the four chappaties he wouldn't have anything left for the morrow. So he took them out and began to mutter: "Should I eat one, or two, or three, or all the four?"

In that well there lived four fairies. When they heard the villager say this they got frightened taking him to be a demon who wanted to eat them. Thinking this, all the fairies came out of the well, and said: "Respected sir, do not eat any of us, for we are four sisters. Take two gifts from us which are very valuable and leave us." Saying this they gave him a bowl and a puppet and told him. "This bowl will yield whatever food you desire, and this puppet will do whatever work you give him."

The villager was very happy, and taking the two gifts went back the way he had come. But since night

had fallen he couldn't reach home, and instead decided to stay for the night in a neighbouring village. He went to a house and said to its owner: "Please put me up for the night, and as soon as it is day I will go away. I will give you and your entire family good things to eat." The man agreed. The villager asked the magic bowl to get good food and then ordered the puppet to clean the utensils. Seeing this wonder the wife of the house-owner thought of stealing the puppet and the bowl. When the villager was asleep she substituted another bowl and a puppet for them and took them away.

In the morning the villager went joyfully home, and told his wife the whole story. But when he asked the bowl for food nothing happened. The puppet too was just a puppet. His wife was furious and thought he was making a fool of her. She shouted in anger: "You are good for nothing and want to beguile me with falsehoods. Now don't even put your foot into the house!"

The poor villager went dolefully to the well where he had met the fairies and began to weep aloud. Hearing him weep they came out of the well and asked him why he wept. After hearing his story, they said: "We had given you those two priceless articles because of fear, but it seems we were deceived. Anyway, now we will help you. This time we are giving you a rope and a stick. It seems for sure that the magic bowl and puppet have been stolen by someone when you slept in the house of the stranger. Go and stay there today also. The rope will tie whomsoever you order it to bind, and the stick will beat whomsoever you order it to do so. With their help you will recover both the things you have lost."

The villager took the rope and the stick and departed. He went to the same house where he had

stayed before. As soon as he reached there he ordered the rope to bind the owners of the house and asked the stick to beat them. After they had got a good beating they began to cry and to beg the villager's forgiveness. It was only when they had promised to give him back the bowl and the puppet that he ordered the stick and the rope to stop. He went back to his wife and showed her the gifts which worked miracles. She was amazed at their working and never again were they in want. Not only this, the stick and the rope gave them absolute security from their enemies. The couple lived very happily thereafter.

SHEIKH CHILLI GOES TO HIS IN-LAWS

SHEIKHJI had not visited his father-in-law's place for quite sometime. One day his mother-in-law wrote a letter inviting him as he had not visited them for long. His mother called him and said : "Son, your brothers-in-law and sisters-in-law have a great desire to see you; so go to your father-in-law's place for a few days." At first Sheikhji hesitated, but pressed by his mother, he got ready, and next day prepared to go. When he was leaving, his mother said : "So, keep three things in mind. Firstly, go straight and don't deviate under any circumstances from your path; secondly, be humble, and thirdly; if someone gives you anything, accept it on your head (i.e. accept it gladly)." Sheikhji listened attentively to all that his mother told him, and then went out.

After leaving the road, he reached the river side. There was yet some time for the boat to come, so he sat down to wait. After a long time he saw the boat coming, but it was from a corner. Remembering his mother's advice, Sheikhji abandoned the idea of going by boat, and instead jumped into the river with all his clothes on and made straight for the other bank ! Instead of taking the road he went across the fields and forests, and reached his in-laws' house after a troublesome journey. He was greeted warmly by everyone there. His young brother-in-law came with a plate of betels and offered them to him. Sheikhji was not used to take betels. Out of politeness he took two and put them into his mouth and began to chew. While he was doing so his gaze fell on a mirror in front, and he was aghast to see a blood-like red juice on his lips. Sheikhji thought it was blood. He remembered that his *hakeem* had said that if blood

began to ooze from the mouth, death was not far off. He began to weep aloud !

There was a great commotion in the house, and all the members of the household thought some misfortune had come upon him and they too began to weep. Whoever came joined others. No one cared to find out what it was all about ! After some time a *Mulla* came there and enquired why they were all weeping. Imagine his surprise when no one could tell him the reason ? Somehow he quietened them, but Sheikhji went on weeping and could not be consoled. *Mullaji* asked him why he wept. Sheikh Chilli said : "Sir, you have come in time. I am going to die. Please recite the Koran so that my soul may have peace." The *Mulla* asked him : "What is your illness ?" Then Sheikhji told him that blood had started coming out of his mouth and he would soon be dead. The *Mulla* looked at him and said with a laugh. "How simple you are Sheikhji ! This is not blood which is on your mouth but betel-juice !"



When it was time for dinner food was served and brought to Sheikhji. His mother-in-law pressed him to take some curry but he declined to take it saying that he didn't have a taste for it. His father-in-law said: "Do take some, your sister-in-law has prepared it, and if you don't have it she'll be disappointed." Sheikhji recollected his mother's advice, and following it literally, poured the bowl containing the hot curry right over his head! His father-in-law was aghast, and when he asked him why he had done so, he said: "My mother told me to accept everything with humility."*

When it was night Sheikh Chilli retired to his bedroom and went off to sleep. At the middle of the night he woke up and saw that an earthen pot had been suspended by a wire-sling right in the middle of his room. He picked up his walking stick and began to poke the pot with it. Suddenly the pointed end of the stick pierced the pot and a stream of honey, for that was what it contained, began to fall from it! Sheikhji was hungry. He had had very little to eat, and opening his mouth lapped up the honey. After some time he said: "Enough, brother: my stomach is full!" but how could the pot understand what he said? He went on protesting, but stayed where he was, till he became completely soaked in honey! He began to think how he could get all the muck off his body. He remembered that there was another room which was full of cotton. Without thinking he went into it and dried himself. In a moment all his body was covered with cotton!

Early morning, while it was still dark Sheikh Chilli's sister-in-law went into the room in which cotton was stored for some work. Seeing some movement in the midst she shouted; "Who is there?" Sheikh Chilli wished to say "Tis me," (*main hun*), but his voice was so subdued that the women thought he said "*Myaun!*" Hear-

* The Hindi expression is *Sir mathe par Svikaar Karna*. Literally it means accepting by putting a thing on the head or forehead. Our Sheikh Chilli took his mother's advice by the letter than in the spirit.

ing this she was terrified and ran out of the room. In a moment everyone came to know that a *Myaun* had entered the house. They hurriedly vacated it and took shelter with their neighbour. Whoever heard about the *Myaun* was filled with fear because the ghost called *Myaun* was considered very dangerous ! So they decided to call a *Mulla* early morning to drive it out.

Meanwhile Sheikh Chilli ran out of the back door and hid himself amidst some goats and sheep which were in the courtyard. After some time thieves came there with the intention of carrying off a sheep or a goat, and catching hold of the stoutest amongst them.—who was no other than our Sheikhji—wrapped him up in a blanket and bore him away on their shoulders. On the way there was a tank. They wanted to bathe in it, so they dropped their burden on the ground. As soon as they did so, Sheikhji shouted painfully : “Oh ! scoundrels ! you have killed me !” The thieves thought it was a ghost and ran away as fast as they could, leaving their blanket behind in the hurry. Sheikhji breathed a sigh of relief, and washing himself well in the tank, dried his clothes, and flinging the blanket upon his shoulders took the way back to his in-laws’ house.

When he reached there he saw many people standing outside the house with worried faces, and arrangements were being made for summoning a *Mulla*. His father-in-law asked him : “Son, where did you go ?” Sheikh Chilli said : I had gone for a wash in the tank nearby. What is all this commotion about ?” On hearing that a very dangerous ghost called *Myaun* had entered the house, he said: “There is no cause for fear. I know how to deal with him,” Saying this he advanced inside with a stick, and beating it on the ground began to mutter incantations. Then coming out he announced triumphantly that the *Myaun* had run away. Encouraged by him the members of the house slowly went in. True enough there was no trace of the *Myaun*. Everyone began to praise Sheikh Chilli’s courage.

A THOUSAND CART-LOADS OF TRICKS

ONE day a cultivator's wife told her husband that a woman's tricks can fill a thousand carts. She also asked him to thank his stars for she did not practise them. The cultivator answered boastfully: "I am not frightened by your tricks." His wife said: "All right, then I'll show you." She took a big fish and before daylight buried it in her field. When the cultivator began to plough the land he discovered it there, and joyfully bringing it home showed it to his wife and said: "I found this in the field. Cook it and make *puries*." His wife cooked the fish and prepared *puries* but when he asked for food she served him plain chappaties and salt. The cultivator looked angrily at her and said: "Where is the fish which I gave you to cook?"

She said: "Fish, where did it come from? Don't make a fool of me!"

The cultivator had seen the fish being cooked with his own eyes, and hearing her lie to him, ran to beat her. She shouted out in loud voice: "Run folks! This man is beating me for nothing!"

Hearing her cries the people of the village came running, and asked: "What has happened?"

The villager said: "Today I brought a very big fish from my field. This woman cooked it before my eyes but does not give it to me now!" Everyone laughed heartily on hearing the cultivator's words. "How can a fish be found in the field?" They said, and went

their way. As soon as they had gone, his wife took out the cooked fish and began eating it. The cultivator shouted: "See folks! She is eating the fish, and would not give me any of it!" The people of the village came back running, but by the time they reached the woman had hidden the fish. She said: "Look he beats me, and asks me to produce the fish. Oh! what shall I do?" Saying this she began to weep aloud. The cultivator kept on insisting: "I had brought the fish from the field. She cooked it in front of me and was just now eating it."

The villagers who had gathered there were convinced that he was possessed by a ghost. They began to drive it out. They beat him soundly with shoes. They burnt chillies near his nose and when he could not stand the fumes and ran they caught him and tied him to a pillar and did not heed his protests!

In the night his wife freed him and gave him a portion of the fish and *puries*, and said: "This is just one trick I have played on you. Now consider what your state will be if I let loose a thousand cart-loads of tricks!"

The cultivator conceded the defeat and kept quiet.

THE GUTRUN-GOON BIRD

THERE was once a king. He had a servant who was very free with the king. One day the servant said : "If you pardon my insolence, I may say something. Your minister's wife is as beautiful as the moon. Why don't you bring her to the palace as one of your queens?" The king said : "What you say is right but till the minister is alive how can I get her? It is only possible after his death."

"That is a simple matter sire," the wicked servant said : "Send him to the snow-clad mountains of the north to fetch the *gutrun-goon* bird. He will never come back."

This counsel pleased the king. When the minister came to him he said : "The *gutrun-goon* bird lives on the snow peaks of the north. Go and bring it. I will reward you well for it."

The minister knew that going to the snowy mountains meant certain death but he could not disobey the king too. So he began to worry day and night. His wife asked him why he was so sad. He told her everything. She said : "This is all a plan to get you killed and to win me over. There is no creature known as the *gutrun-goon* bird. Leave it to me. Hide yourself in the house. I will do the rest."

After many days had passed the king thought his minister was dead. He sent the servant to bring his wife to him. The minister's wife treated him very well and the servant was convinced that she was willing

to go and that the king would reward him well. The minister's wife asked him to come the next day. She prepared a cot woven of weak strings for him to sit on and spread on it a fine bedding. She dug a pit under the cot and filled it with treacle.

The servant came the next day. The minister's wife made him sit on the cot she had prepared for him. As soon as he sat the strings of the cot gave way and he fell into the treacle. The minister came out of his room instantly, and helped by his wife, took the servant out of the pit. He gagged his mouth and after giving him a sound thrashing, bored his nose and put an iron chain through it. Then pasting gold-leaf, silver-paper, and the like, on his treacle-covered body, gave him the appearance of a big bird. After he had done so he gave him five blows with his shoe and said : "Say *gutrun-goon*." The gagged servant somehow opened his mouth a little and said slowly "*gutrun-goon!*"

"Okay," the minister said, "now if you don't speak thus before the king, remember, I will thrash you to death. He caught the chain, and dragging the unwilling servant by it, took him to the king and said : "Sire, I have brought you the *gutrun-goon* bird."

The king was astonished to see the 'bird,' and could not say anything. But even then he was happy to possess a creature the like of which no other king had. He said : "What is the characteristic of this bird."

The minister said, "Sire! when you beat this bird five times with a shoe it says *gutrun-goon*." The bird became great fun for everybody. First the minister gave the shoe-blows and made it speak "*gutrun-goon*". Then everyone in the court began to do it and enjoy the fun. The servant got a terrible beating.

In the night the 'bird' was tied to a pillar. It so happened that it rained in the night and all the paper

pasted on the servant's body was washed off. The servant stood trembling in the cold.



The king happened to pass that way. He saw his servant standing there instead of the bird and was greatly surprised. He freed him with great difficulty for his nose through which the chain went had swollen. The servant wept and after he had told the king everything, said : "It is impossible to outwit the minister!"

SHEIKHJI'S KHITCHERY

ONE day Sheikh Chilli drank a lot of sugarcanejuice and caught a chill. So he consulted a *hakeem* who gave him medicine and advised him to take *Khitchery*¹ for two or three days. Sheikhji had never before heard of *Khitchery* so he kept repeating the word as he went along home. After some time he began to say *Kha Chiri* instead of *Khitchery*. As he went along repeating *Kha Chiri*², he came across a cultivator who was tending his field. When the cultivator heard what Sheikh Chilli was saying he thought that he was calling the birds to eat the grain in his field, and began to belabour him. Sheikhji was surprised and said : "Friend, why do you beat me needlessly? What have I done?" The farmer said : "If you keep on repeating these insulting words I will beat you even more." What shall I say then?" Sheikhji asked. "Say *Ur Chiri*,³" the farmer said.

Sheikhji begged the farmer's pardon and went from there repeating *Ur Chiri* as he had been instructed. He had gone a little distance when he came across a fowler who had set up his net for catching birds. When he heard Sheikhji shouting "*Ur Chiri ! Ur Chiri!*" he abused him vehemently. "What wrong have I done," Sheikhji said: "that you should abuse me so ?" The fowler said : "What a great idiot you are to come driving my birds away. If you don't stop saying that, I'll give you the soundest thrashing you've ever got in your life?" Sheikhji was quite confounded and said: "What should I say, then?" The fowler said: "Say *Phans Chiri*⁴ instead of *Ur Chiri*."

Now Sheikh Chilli went on his way repeating *Phans Chiri*. While he was going thus, he came across four thieves who were returning after having committed a theft in the town. When they heard Sheikhji saying : "*Phans Chiri ! Phans Chiri*." they thought he was praying that they should be trapped and put into jail. They caught hold of him and tying him to a tree put a gag into his mouth. Poor Sheikhji had a rough time for no fault of his, and it was only after some travellers came that way and freed him that he could go home. But for the rest of the way he took care to keep quiet!

- ¹ A kind of preparation of rice and pulse given to patients during illness or convalescence.
- ² *Kha Chiri*=May the birds eat.
- ³ *Ur Chiri*=May the birds fly away!
- ⁴ *Phans Chiri*=O bird! may you get trapped!

SHEIKH CHILLI IN DELHI

BAD days had come upon Sheikhji. He thought he would go to some big city to earn a living. He had heard that in Delhi there were many rich folks who paid handsomely. So he decided to go there. On the way to the railway station he met a man whom he asked : "Friend, I have never yet travelled by a train. I wish to go to Delhi. Please let me know how I should proceed." The man said : "It is very simple. Tickets are sold outside the station. Take one to Delhi and get in. There a black demon-like thing will come from whose mouth smoke will be coming out. Ride upon it."

Sheikhji went speedily to the station, and standing outside the booking window asked for a ticket to Delhi. The booking clerk said : "Give me five rupees and fifty paises." Hearing this Sheikhji said : "This is too much. Please take something less." The clerk looked at him sharply and said : "I can't give you a ticket for less than the fixed fare. If you have to take one, pass on the money otherwise move off and let others take their tickets." Sheikhji was hurt and said : "What a way of running your business ! All right, at least leave the paises and take a fiver. The customer doesn't come for one day only, he'll come again and again if you charge him the right price. If you have to run your business remember that you'll have to satisfy your customer." The clerk never had to deal with such a man, and he shouted angrily : "What a fool are you! Don't waste my time. If you have to take a ticket take one or else go your way!" Hearing this Sheikh Chilli's blood began to boil and he flung the money on the

counter saying : "All right, don't think I'm such a pauper as you imagine!"

Clutching his ticket Sheikhji went on the platform. The train had not yet arrived. He stood waiting expectantly. All at once he saw a railway official wearing a black coat and smoking a cigarette. Recollecting the words of the man whom he had met on the way—"a black demon from whose mouth smoke will be coming out"—he suddenly ran and pounced upon the poor man, who pushed him off and brushing his clothes said : "Idiot! what's wrong with you ? Run away!" "Brandishing his ticket Sheikh Chilli said : "I have got a ticket,



what do you think? And I had to pay full five rupees and fifty paises for it, not a pie less; and that obstinate man did not even leave one paise. Now you will surely have to take me to Delhi!" The people who had gathered around him were convinced that he was a simpleton and quietened him. When the train came, Sheikhji ran and entered a first class compartment.

He sat down comfortably on the plush seat and began to survey with child-like wonder this moving box-like compartment and gazed out at the trees and telegraph poles which seemed out to be rushing past. Suddenly a ticket examiner came and asked for his ticket. Sheikhji was lost in his thoughts and hearing the voice of the ticket examiner he said : "Do not be insolent, I have paid the fare before getting on the train." The ticket examiner said : "Mister, there are some people who travel without paying the fare. It is my job to check them. If you have a ticket show it, otherwise I will get you put in jail."

As soon as Sheikhji heard the word 'Jail' he took out his ticket. The ticket examiner said : "This is a third class ticket, and you are travelling first. Pay up the excess fare".

"What is the difference between a third class and a first class?" Sheikh Chilli asked. The ticket examiner said : "There are no cushioned seats in third class." Sheikhji got up, and throwing off the cushioned bottom of the seat, said : "I don't want the cushions then." The ticket examiner realised that the man was a simpleton and it was useless to argue with him, so he went off smiling to himself.

At last Sheikh Chilli got down at Delhi. The large city amazed him but taking courage he started walking through the city. He began to feel thirsty, and seeing a pipe inside a house he went in and began to drink water from it. While he was drinking the owner of the house came. When he found a man with ragged clothes there he said sternly : "What are you doing here?" Sheikhji said : "Are you blind? Can't you see I'm drinking water? It seems you city folk are more foolish than us. Is this a question to ask?" The gentleman realised that the man was fresh from the village and did not know about city life. He was on

the look out for a syce. So he offered Sheikh Chilli the job, which he gladly accepted for this was what he had come for.

One day Sheikhji had taken the Sahib and his wife on a horse-cart. The two were so much engrossed in conversation that they did not notice the Memsahib's purse falling out. Sheikhji saw the purse drop but he didn't say anything. After some time when it was missed, he said : "It had fallen out and I swear I saw it fall." Memsahib shouted angrily : "You fool ! why didn't you pick it up ?"

Sheikhji answered : "I did not have any orders about it." The Sahib laughed at his simplicity and said : "All right, now remember to pick up anything which may fall out while the cart is on the way." After a few days the Sahib went for an outing with his friends. When they returned, Sheikhji unharnessed the horses and put them in the stable. Then he took a cloth bag and went to the drawing room where the Sahib was entertaining his friends. He gave the bag to him and said : "Sir, in this bag is that which dropped out of the carriage when it was being driven. I have brought it to you as you ordered". The Sahib thought it was some valuable thing which had accidentally fallen out, and opened the bag on the table. Out came the horse's dung from inside it! His friends began to laugh and the Sahib was very much embarrassed. He picked up a stick and giving Sheikh Chilli a good beating, dismissed him.

THE BOTTLE OF OIL

ONE day the person whom Sheikh Chillli was serving gave him a moneyorder form and some money and asked him to go to the telegraph office and have the moneyorder sent. Sheikhji went along puzzling over the question how the money could go by wire. When he asked the clerk incredulously: "Can this money go by telegraph?" The clerk said: "Certainly," and taking the money and the form, sent it.

After some days, when Sheikhji got his wages, he remembered that his wife has asked him to send her a bottle of perfumed hairoil as soon as he could. He bought a bottle immediately, and going to the telegraph office said to the clerk: "Please send this bottle by telegraph. My wife wants it very urgently. It will reach her, won't it?" The clerk knew that he was dealing with a fool, kept the bottle, and Sheikhji went away.

After a few days his wife wrote to him that the bottle of oil had not reached her, and asked him when he would send it. Sheikhji at once went to the telegraph office and said to the clerk: "Look here, I had sent the bottle of hairoil by telegraph because my wife had urgent need of it but it hasn't reached yet. How is this?" The clerk pondered for a while, and said: "It's like this: when your bottle was going by wire from this end, someone sent a staff from the other end and the bottle collided with it and broke! What could I do?"

Sheikh Chillli said: "In that case how can I blame you? If ever I get hold of the man whose staff it was, I will break his head. What business had he to send his staff when my bottle was moving on the wire from this end?"

KANA BHAI

TWO brothers lived in a village. The elder one was handsome and mean, while the younger was one-eyed but not a fool. The elder brother did not like his younger brother. He turned him out of the house.

No one would marry poor Kana Bhai, the younger brother. After a good deal of search he found a wife who too was one-eyed ! To add to his misfortunes his brother took the good bullocks himself and left him only a one-eyed bullock to plough his field with. So the younger brother would call his wife to take the place of the other bullock in the plough.

One day when he was ploughing his field with his wife and a bullock yoked the god Mahadeva, along with Parvati, chanced to pass that way. Seeing the woman yoked to the plough, Parvati wailed : "Lord, come let us see what kind of man is this who treats his wife so badly." When she asked Kana Bhai about it he told her his sorrowful story. Parvati took pity on him and said to Mahadeva : "Lord, if there is anything in your wooden bowl please give it to this poor man." Mahadeva put his hand inside the bowl and brought out five pumpkin seeds. Giving them to Kana Bhai he said : "Sow them in your field." Kana Bhai sowed one seed on each corner of the field and one in the middle. In a few days the creepers spread all over the field bearing hundreds of fine large pumpkins ! He was over-joyed to see them and when the pumpkins were big enough, he and his wife gathered all of them and stored them in their house. When Kana Bhai's wife cut one of the pumpkins to cook it, imagine her surprise when she found it full of rice !

She cut all the pumpkins eagerly and collected all the rice which came out of them.

The story of the Kana Bhai's luck spread in the village. When the elder brother knew about this he was very envious. One dark night he quietly went to Kana Bhai's house and set fire to it. The house was reduced to ashes. Kana Bhai was filled with sorrow. He collected the ashes in a sack and lifting it said to his wife : "You stay here, I am going to sell these ashes in the market."

While Kana Bhai was going to the market with the sack-full of ashes on his bullock, he met a rich merchant who was passing that way. The merchant was returning after doing day-long business. His son, who was with him, was tired. So he said to Kana Bhai : "Brother, this small child is too tired to walk further. Please let him sit on your bullock. I will pay you well when I reach home." Kana Bhai said : "No *Sethji*, these sacks are full of gold and silver. If your son soils them, all of it will be reduced to ashes." The merchant said : "Brother, do not fear. If my son soils the sacks, and your precious load is reduced to ashes, I will give you equal measure of gold and silver in return."

Kana Bhai lifted the merchant's son and seated him upon his sacks. When it was night he reached *Sethji's* house. As soon as Kana Bhai had helped the child down, he put up a pretence of rage and said : "Look *Sethji*, all my gold and silver are now nothing but ash ! Your son has soiled my sack." The merchant saw that this was indeed true, and filled the sacks with silver and gold, as he had promised. Kana Bhai joyfully took his bullock home.

When his elder brother heard about Kana Bhai's good fortune, he came running to him and asked : "Brother from where did you get so much gold and silver ?"

Kana Bhai answered : "Oh ! don't you know ? Some distance from here there is a city. Ash is sold at a very good price there. I sold all the ashes of my house in that city in exchange for this gold and silver." His elder brother went back and set fire to his own house ! He gathered all the ash and went to sell it in the market. Everyone thought he was crazy and laughed at him. He had to throw away the ash.

The elder brother was filled with rage. He saw through the trick of Kana Bhai. He called his friends and plotted with them to kill him. When it was night they entered Kana Bhai's house, and bound him to the cot on which he was sleeping. The elder brother said : "Come, let us now throw him in to the river, cot and all."

The men carried the cot to which Kana Bhai was tied. The river was yet far off when they felt hungry. So they left Kana Bhai and went off to get something to eat. While they were away, a shepherd happened to pass by. When he saw Kana Bhai, he said : "Friend, how are you lying here tied to this cot ?"

Kana Bhai answered : "Brother shepherd, my relations were pressing me to marry. I refused; so they have forcibly tied me to this cot, and are now taking to get me married."

The shepherd said : "What a strange man you are! Why do you refuse to get married ? If some one asked me to marry, I would do so readily."

Kana Bhai said : "Why not untie me and take my place. I will cover your face with a cloth, so that these men will not recognize you, and then you can easily get married." The shepherd liked the idea, and let himself be tied to the cot.

When the men who were carrying the cot came back they took the shepherd to be Kana Bhai, and lifted their



burden again. When they reached the river they threw the cot into it, and came back.

Kana Bhai was back home with all the sheep which the shepherd was tending. Seeing so many fine sheep tied in front of his house, his elder brother went to him and said in a surprised voice : "From where did you get so many sheep ?"

Kana Bhai said : "Dear brother, you made a mistake by throwing me near the brink of the river. It was because of this that I got only sheep. If you had thrown me in the middle of the current I would have got elephants, horses, and a lot of treasure !" The elder brother said : "All right, please take me along, too, and throw me in the middle of the river for I am very desirous of getting horses, elephants and wealth."

Kana Bhai said : "Come along, I am ready. I would like you to be rich. He took his wicked brother to the river, and threw him in the deep current after having tied his hands and feet. With the wicked brother having gone, Kana Bhai lived happily ever after.

THE LUSTROUS QUEEN

ONCE upon a time the king of Oudh while out hunting, got separated from his companions. At night he reached a town. He went to the market and wanted to buy a match-box so that he could burn a lamp. The shopkeeper said: "Why do you wish to waste oil? There is no need for a lamp in this city." "How so?" asked the king in surprise. The shopkeeper said: "The princess of this kingdom is very beautiful. She bathes with twenty-one jars of water in the night, and then stands on her roof. The lustre of her body illuminates the whole town." The king was astonished and became curious to see this beautiful woman. He went to the palace with this object.

After some time the princess bathed with twenty-one jars of water and went on her roof. The entire city became bright with her body's glimmer. The king thought that such a beautiful woman should be his wife and sent a maidservant inside to her with the message that the king of Oudh was standing at her door and wanted to make her his queen.

The mother of the princess came out and said: "If you can get the two wells which are in my kingdom filled up, I can give you the princess in marriage."

The king thought this to be a small task. He got a number of labourers and ordered them to fill up the wells. The labourers went on working for a whole month but still the wells could not be filled up! The king had no more money to pay them. So he himself began to dig earth to fill the wells. Seeing the king engaged in this task the lustrous princess took pity on

him. Unknown to her mother she sent the king a ring along with a message that he should break it into two parts and drop one in each well.

The king did as he was told and soon the wells got filled up. The princess was married to him according to her mother's promise. The king took the lustrous queen and proceeded to Oudh. On the way they felt hungry. The queen had two beautiful handkerchiefs. She gave them to the king, and said: "Sell these and buy something to eat."

The king made the queen sit on the platform of a well and went away to the market and began to bargain with a cloth merchant. When the merchant came to know that his beautiful wife was sitting on the platform of the well he sent a man secretly who said to her: "The king has sent for you. He has arranged for the food and awaits your presence." The queen unsuspectingly accompanied him, and the merchant's messengers imprisoned her in his house. Meanwhile, when the king bought the food and came to the well he found his queen missing. This grieved him so much that he became mad, went about bewailing mournfully all over the city: "Oh! my lustrous queen, where have you gone!"

Wandering about, the king happened to pass by the house of the merchant. The queen was confined in a room on the upper story, and as soon as she heard the king's voice, she recognized it. Looking out of the window, she said: "Oh! king of Oudh, I am imprisoned here. Throw me a rope so that I may get down by its help." The king was very pleased and went away to get the rope. But the queen had been overheard by a sweeper. Before the king could return, he got a rope himself, and threw one end up the open window. The queen got down and found too late that it was not his beloved king but a common sweeper who had thrown it! The sweeper confined her in his house. When the king came back and did not find her, he again started be-

wailing as before as though mad. The merchant too did not find her and he too suffered the same fate.

The sweeper was fond of smoking the hookah. He would get the coals put in the *chilam* by the queen and smoke it. One day she made the tobacco mixture so strong that he fainted. The queen fled from his house and escaped to the neighbouring kingdom of her brother who too was a king. When the sweeper came back and found her gone he, also became mad and began to wander about shouting "You used to fill my *chilam*. Oh! where have you gone!"

The queen said to her brother: "Get hold of all the mad men in the cities round about." All the mad men were brought before him and amongst them were the king, the merchant, and the sweeper. The queen detained these three, and got the others freed. Then she got the sweeper and the merchant given a good beating. The king thought he would also suffer the same fate but he was asked to bathe and dress and present himself in the palace. When he arrived there the queen told him all that had happened. The king was at last reunited with his beloved queen and they set out for Oudh.

GANGA IN A TROUGH

ONCE upon a time there was a *pundit* who was a great devotee of the river Ganga. He would bathe in the holy river every month without fail. One day when he was going to bathe on a festival day his shoes gave way and he had to get them repaired. The renowned devotee Raidasa was a *chamar* by caste. The pundit said to him; while he was repairing the shoes, "You people have not the slightest devotion for Gangaji. If you had, all your sorrows would have ended and you would not have remained a *chamar*!"

Raidasa said : "If the mind is pure, Gangaji can be contained in a trough. There is no advantage in merely bathing in the Ganga."

The *pundit* pitied Raidasa's lack of wisdom. When he was leaving, the *chamar*, Raidasa, gave him two betel-nuts and said : "Offer these on my behalf to mother Ganga. But give them only when she stretches her hand to take them." Laughing at Raidasa's foolishness, the *pundit* took the betel-nuts and went his way. After bathing he made his own offering, and when he was about to leave he suddenly remembered about the betel-nuts which Raidasa had given him. He took them out and said : "Mother Ganga, Raidasa has sent you these." Instantly a lovely lotus-like hand wearing a glittering bangle studded with precious gems, emerged out of the river. The *pundit* was very much astonished to see it. He put the betel-nuts in the hand. The fingers of the river goddess closed round them and taking off her bangle she said : "Give this to *bhakta* Raidasa".

Punditji was greatly perplexed when the goddess gave him the bangle. While he was returning an evil thought came to his mind.

He thought : "If I take this bangle to the king and tell him the Mother Ganga has given it to me, I will be honoured and be rewarded with a lot of property and wealth."

The *pundit* did not give the bangle to Raidasa. Instead he went to the king and presented it to him. The king was happy to see it and said : "This is a very beautiful bangle, but a single one does not appear appropriate. Mother Ganga is pleased with your devotion. Go and ask her for the other bangle also. I will take you there. We will reach without any loss of time."

The *pundit* was trapped but he could not do anything about it. On reaching the bank of the Ganga he tried to placate the goddess by tears, entreaties, and prayers but nothing happened.

Seeing this, the king's anger mounted. He said : "You are a liar, a cheat, and a humbug. Tell me truly from where did you get this bangle, or I will get you executed." Out of fear the *pundit* told the king everything.

The king went along with the *pundit*, and escorted by his soldiers, to Raidasa. He told Raidasa the whole story and then said : "You give me this bangle and ask Mother Ganga for the other one of the pair also. I will take you within minutes to the riverside where you can make your request to the goddess."

Raidasa said : "What is the need of going to the riverside? If the mind is pure Ganga can be contained in a trough ! But I will get you another bangle on the condition that you set free the *pundit*."

The king promised to do so. Raidasa filled water in a trough, and said : "Mother Ganga, the king wishes to have your bangle. Please give it to him on my request." Instantly the same lotus-like hand as had come out before, appeared in the trough with a similar bangle in it. Raidasa took it and gave it to the king, and the hand disappeared.

All the soldiers, the *pundit*, and the king, bowed low and touched Raidasa's feet.

THE LUCKY PRINCESS

A certain king had seven daughters. One day he called all of them and asked: "By whose good fortune do you get food to eat?" Six of the girls answered: "By your good fortune, father." But the youngest one said: "By mine!" The king was very angry to hear her reply and said: "All right! If you think so, I will marry you to a dead man. Then you can live on your good fortune!"

True to his words, the king married six of his daughters to princes, while youngest one he took with him to the forest in search of a dead body. In the night he felt thirsty. He saw a house close by. The king said to his daughter: "Go and get me some water from that house. I am sitting here under the shade of this tree." His daughter went with a rope and a *lotah* inside the house to bring water. As soon as she entered, the doors closed on her! When the king saw that his daughter did not return, he left her to her fate, and went back.

The princess saw that the house was a palace. All things of daily use were there, but she could not see anyone inside. When she had gone through all the rooms without meeting anyone, she went to an attic on the topmost storey. There, to her surprise she found the corpse of a beautiful prince on whose body countless needles had been stuck. The princess thought in her mind: 'My father wanted to marry me to a dead man, and so he has sent me here'. Musing thus, she began to look after the dead prince and started taking out the needles from the body one after the other.

While she occupied herself in this manner she heard the voice of a merchant who was passing by the house shouting "Does anyone want a maidservant?" The princess thought that a companion was very welcome in the circumstances in which she was placed. So she got a maidservant for herself. The maidservant would do all her work and she would sit by the side of the dead prince pulling out the needles from his body. The maidservant would sit and watch all this.

One day, when the last three needless which were embedded in the prince's eyelid, remained to be taken out, the princess thought of having a bath before she pulled them out. When she had gone, the maidservant took her place by the side of the dead prince and pulled out the three remaining needles. As soon as she did so, the prince came to life. Rubbing his eyes he said: "I have slept a long time." When he asked the maidservant who she was, the cunning woman said: "I am a princess and there is another girl with me who is my maidservant." The poor princess could say nothing, and had to accept her fate.

One day the prince had to go to the city. He asked both women what he should bring for them. The false princess asked for an emerald and a Pigtail for her hair, and the real princess asked him to bring her a doll. The prince brought them what they desired. When the princess got her doll, every night she would talk to it and narrate her tale of sorrow. The prince soon found this out. He said to the false princess: "The maidservant keeps murmuring something to her doll. Come, let us find out what she says." The false princess said: "Why do you worry about that? She must be off her mind." The prince, however, insisted on finding out, and going to the maidservant said: "What do you keep speaking to your doll in the night?"

The true princess tried her utmost to put him off but the prince would not go, and at last she told him her whole story. When she had finished, the prince was very angry at the deceit of the maidservant. The maidservant was turned out. He married the real princess and lived happily thereafter.

THERE was once a family of three consisting of husband, wife and their son. All the three loved each other greatly. The husband and wife got on very well together. One day, however, they quarrelled and stopped speaking to each other. They began to live in separate rooms.

Soon after a stranger came in that village. As he reached in the night he decided to stop there. By chance he came to the house where the husband and wife lived. The husband was away somewhere but his wife was in the house. When she saw the stranger who was sitting outside in the verandah she took him to be a friend of her husband and came and greeted him. The stranger asked: "Where is the master of the house?" The woman said: "I don't know, he seems to have gone somewhere." At this moment the child, who was sitting there, said: "Father has not told mother where he has gone. He is not on speaking terms with her." After some time the child asked the stranger: "Who are you?" What could the stranger say? After thinking a little he said: "I am *Mama*".¹ The boy went to his mother and said: "Mama has come." The woman thought, 'he can't be the boy's *Mama*, and he is not mine; so he must be my husband's *Mama*.' Thinking this she prepared a good meal for him.

After a while her husband came back, and seeing somebody sitting outside he asked his son: "Who is this man?" The boy said: "He says he is *Mama*. Mother also says that he is *Mama*." The husband was puzzled

¹ In North India *Mama* stands for maternal uncle or mother's brother.

and thought: "He isn't my *Mama*, and he cannot be my son's *Mama*. Doubtless he is my wife's *Mama*". Thinking thus he showed him all due respect. The stranger, who was a cunning man, kept him engaged in talk and did not give any opportunity for further questioning.

The stranger had his sumptuous meal and prepared to sleep. He was thankful that the husband and wife were on bad terms. If it was not so who would have cared for him? In the morning when the husband went to the stranger's room to greet him, much to his surprise he found the bed empty! He went and stood near his wife, and after much hesitation said to his son: "Ask your mother whether her *Mama* has gone!"

His wife said: "Even if you want to quarrel with me, should you abuse me thus?" He said: "That man was your *Mama*, wasn't he?" The wife was piqued, and said: "My *Mama* is already dead." The baffled husband asked: "Then whose *Mama* was he?" The wife said: "I thought he was your *Mama*!" Their son, who was hearing their conversation, began to laugh uproariously. Hearing him laugh, his mother also began to laugh. The husband, however, started cursing the stranger. His wife put her hand on his mouth, and stopping him said: "A guest is like god! Indeed this man was like a god to us. If he had not come we would not have started speaking to each other!" The husband too began to laugh. He said: "What a funny incident it was!"

